

ドラゴン

～竜騎士への道～

3

わい
Wai



Dragoon

Arc 3

by Mishima Yomu & Wai

[Novel Updates](#)

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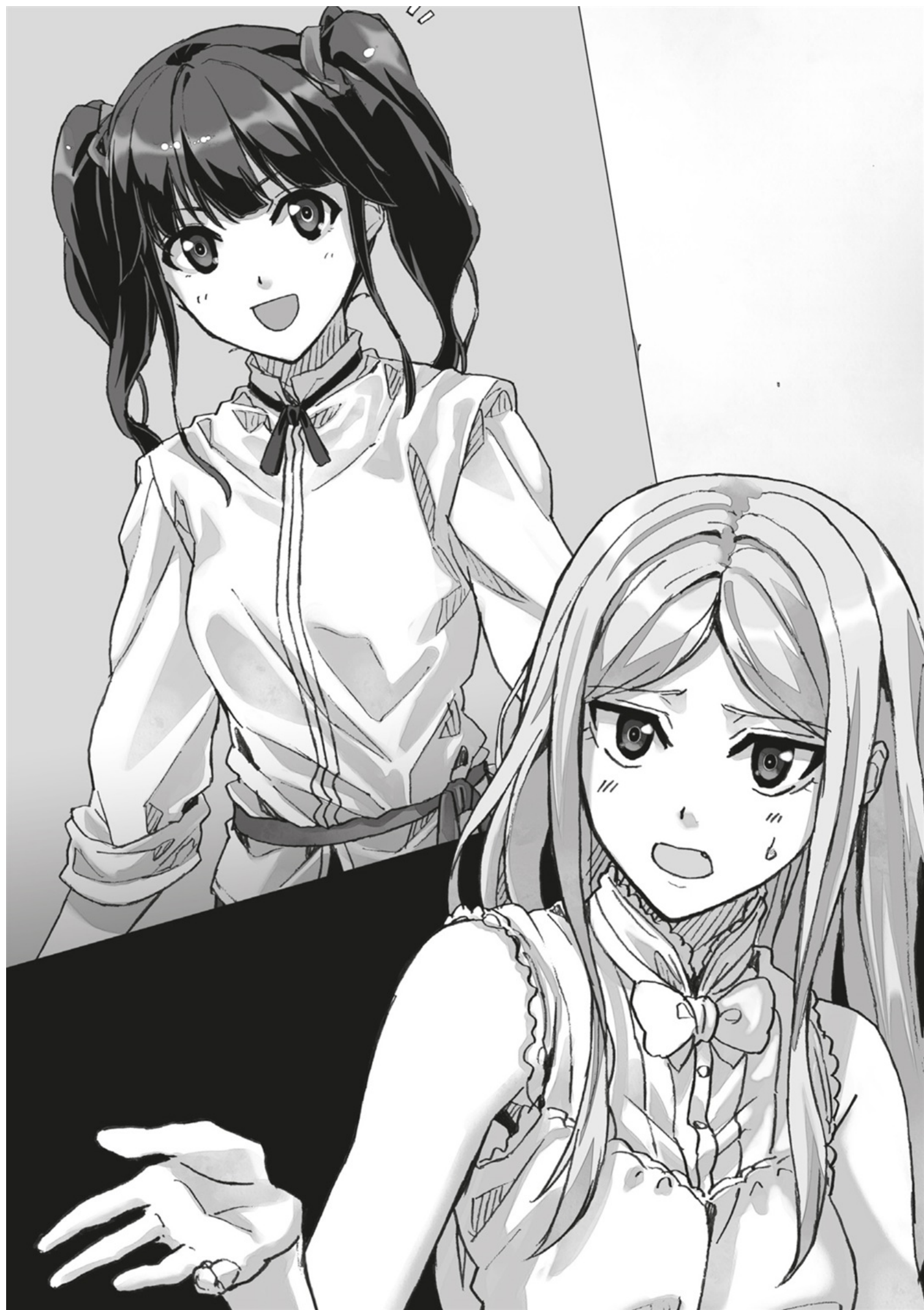
「どうしてよ。」

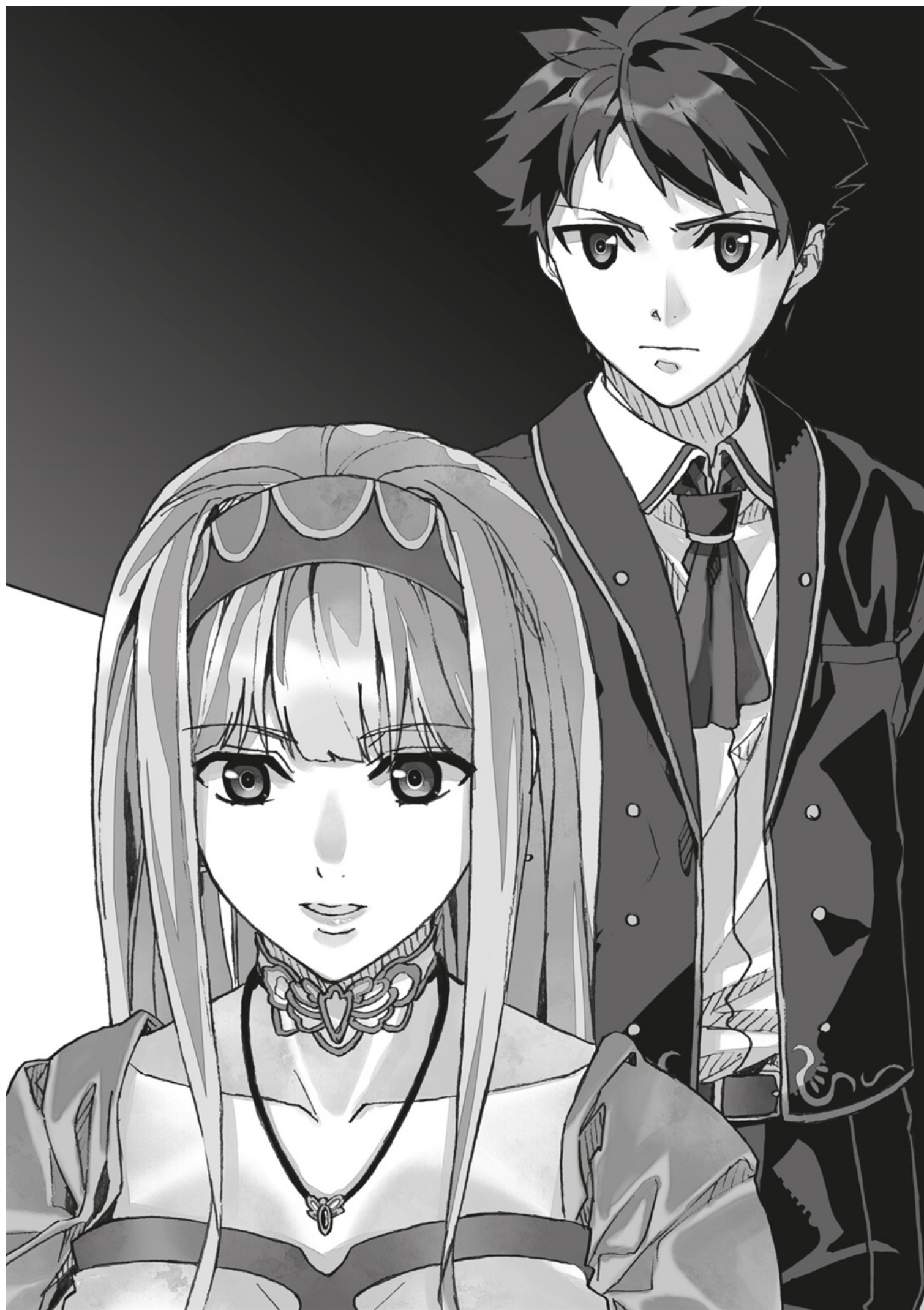
折角、私にも友達が出来たのに！
ようやく目標だって出来たのに。
何よ、時間が無いって、
どういう事よお!!」





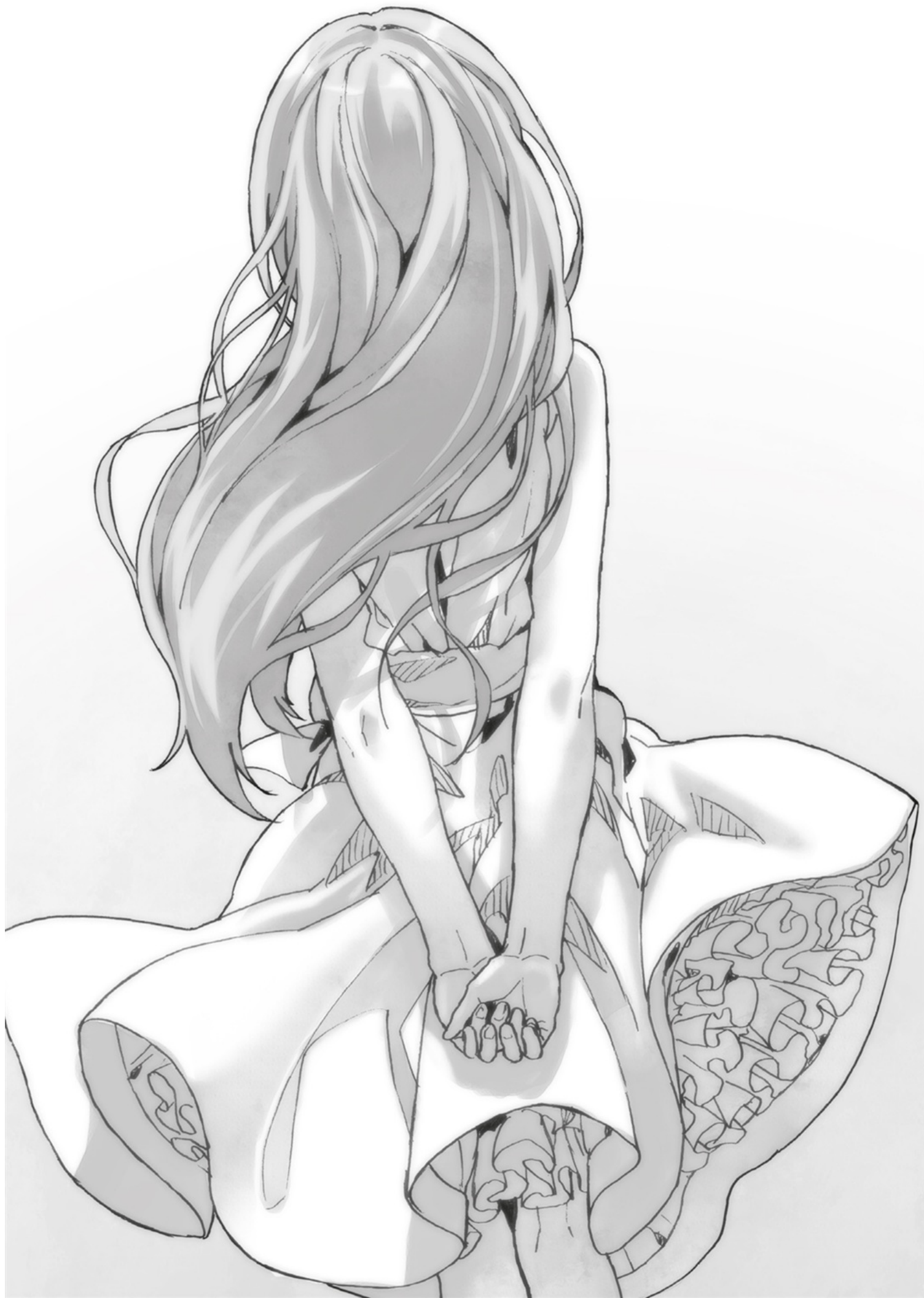












Chapter 53: The Protagonist and the Last Boss

Having safely become fourth years, Rudel and co were having a discussion over their futures in the academy cafeteria. Surrounding a round table, Luecke, Eunius and Izumi... alongside their usual members, Aleist was there as well.

As lunch had already gone by, there were few people at the cafeteria. In such a situation, Aleist mumbled some complaints as he ate the cakes lining the table.

“Why’d you have to call me? Originally, I wanted to have this badass reunion sort of thing going at the tournament. And Millia’s been distant from me ever since Valentine’s Day... hah.”

“Valentine? Was that chocolate distribution thing you were doing some sort of festival?”

Luecke sipped his tea, ignoring all of Aleist’s complaints as he bit onto the unfamiliar term Valentine’s Day.

“That thing he did around the end of the third year? As I recall, Rudel and Izumi made chocolate together and exchanged them... so what sort of festival is it?”

Eunius also ignored Aleist’s complaints, requesting an explanation on Valentine’s Day.

“... Not telling.”

Aleist averted his eyes from the two of them in an attempt to put up a slight resistance.

“You apparently give chocolates to the person you like. Aleist and his friends were putting their all into making chocolate, and when I got curious and asked, that’s what he said... I also gave some to Izumi.”

Rudel answered quite calmly.

(Normally, the girl’s supposed to give to a guy... why did we have to make chocolates so seriously, I wonder. By the time I noticed it, the girls had gathered

and snatched them all, so I couldn't give Millia anything. Should I teach him about white day while I'm at it?)

Aleist's feeble resistance was meaningless before Rudel. Listening to Rudel's words, Aleist hesitated over whether to tell him the truth or not.

But that conversation was interrupted by Luecke as he started into the main issue.

"Well that doesn't really matter. The problem is how we're going to spend our remaining two years. Me and Rudel, and that muscle-head over there have some freedom, but what about you two?"

"Once I get my knight qualifications, I plan to take on the high knight qualification test."

Izumi lowered her eye level a little as she answered Luecke's question. Right, the way things were going, Izumi and Rudel would graduate the academy and part in two years time. Thinking of it that way, Izumi felt a little lonely.

On the other side, Aleist smiled as he thought over how he was going to enjoy his remaining two years. At the same time, he recalled how he was supposed to spend this time going by the game.

(As I recall... the mid-game has the highest level of freedom. You can make friends with the kids who enroll around this time. Since you've just about completed capturing the other girls, after all. But if you don't do various things during this time period, things go to hell after you graduate. The war event becomes a hard fight, and...!?)

Aleist's face suddenly turned pale as he stood from his seat. Seeing that, the other four turned wondering what was going on, but without noticing them, Aleist started to mutter again before raising his voice.

"A-at this rate, it'll be terrible... i-in that case, I have no choice but to do it!"

"I don't know what you're trying to do, but that's the spirit, Aleist."

Oblivious, Rudel cheered him on.

"I'm going to the temple in the borderland. There, I have to class change from magic swordsman into an advanced class."

“I-I see... well, good luck with that.”

As Aleist confidently threw out the words class change and advanced job, Eunius had no idea what to say, so he gave a vague answer. Luecke rubbed his inner eyes as he closed his eyelids in thought.

(At times, I can't understand Aleist at all. To change from a magic swordsman into something, he has to go to the outer reaches? ... it's no good, I don't get it. Is he getting his hands on some new technique? Or is there some hermit in the mountains over there?)

Izumi didn't know what to say either, so for now she tried asking Rudel. Perhaps it was a special custom not found in the orient, and with that on her mind, she turned to Rudel... only to find his eyes sparkling as he looked at Aleist.

“Can you become strong if you go to the borderland?”

“Of course. Five years ago, I myself went to become a magic swordsman, so there's no doubt about it.”

Seeing Aleist clearly declare it, Rudel gave some serious thought.

Rudel himself understood it, the way things were going he was closing in on his limit. He hasn't been negligent in his daily training. But Luecke, Eunius and Aleist in the academy... after fighting them, he realized he really didn't have any talent.

In such a situation, taking on a challenge in the pursuit of strength didn't sound bad.

“... Then I'm going too.”

“R-Rudel?”

“Oy, get a grip on yourself!”

“Don't be hasty! It's just Aleist's usual sickness.”

Paying no heed to Izumi and the other's attempts to stop him, Rudel decided on a trip to the borderlands with Aleist.



The Gaia Empire. It was a country given no real detail in-game, a land that existed for the sole purpose of making a hero out of the protagonist. In a room

of that empire, a certain individual had called Mies, who had failed in her mission and divulged national secrets. The special skill of the Licorise House's Mies, or rather her in-game skill 'Successful Flight' didn't allow her to avoid responsibility, and she was receiving disciplinary action.

Her actions were used as a reason to cut down the Licorise House's power in the political world. All that remained of the house were the experiment documents and results of the monster enhancement plans they been tasked with developing for the express purpose of ruining themselves...

The person who called out Mies appeared in the room she waited.

"I'm sorry to have kept you waiting."

His age was perhaps in his early twenties. Long, curling silver hair draped over his loosely-worn clothes of high-class make, a man entered the room to give Mies a polite bow. He was tall in stature, and from his trained body and the way he moved, he gave off an air that he wasn't your average joe.

"No, it is no issue to me, your majesty."

"Don't be like that. Call me Askewell or Al or whatever you like. From here on out, you're going to become my precious collaborator, after all."

Askewell Gaia... the empire's third prince, and the commander of the imperial army. A smile on his face, Askewell urged Mies to take a seat as he read through the documents he had received beforehand. His expression turned serious as could be.

"Are the contents written here to be taken as fact?"

"... Yes."

Mies told Askewell the truth. As she did, Askewell's initial strained expression eventually turned to a smile.

"Wonderful. So it is possible to take perfect command of powerful soldiers... I cannot comprehend why the higher-ups would ever reject such a plan."

On those words, Mies feared the prince just a little. But she told herself this was a necessary measure to regain the Licorise House's authority.

"The method isn't perfect. And it could not put up a decent fight against a

dragon.”

“No problem. Courtois isn’t able to maintain so many dragons. Furthermore... if you can enhance ogres and orcs in large numbers and make soldiers of them, it is the Courtois soldiers who won’t be able to put up a decent fight.”

Honestly, Mies was dim when it came to military affairs. But thinking she had to say something, she tried to joke around by bringing up the necessary food supply to maintain an ogre.

“While it may be easier than rearing a dragon, an enhanced ogre eats more than your common soldier. You should prepare yourself for twice the food expenditure.”

Hearing that, Prince Askewall’s smile didn’t change. But Mies grew afraid of that smile.

“I told you it isn’t a problem. There’s plenty of food to be found where we’re going.”

“Eh?”

“You cannot comprehend? Or could it be you’re purposely trying not to... so be it. I’m talking humans. If we invade, we’ll have plenty on our hands. And even if they face defeat, what we lose are not people of the empire. We lose only monsters.”

Askewell spoke to Mies’ confusion.

“I’ll prepare you a research lab. First off, you are to prepare twenty enhanced ogres. I’ve secured a place for you to experiment... and worry not, a monster attacking humans is only a natural occurrence. Whether they be enhanced or not, monsters are monsters... there is no need for it to weigh on your mind.”

This was Askewell Gaia, the last boss of the game.

Chapter 54: The Goddess and the Two Great Idiots

Packing a load of baggage into his rucksack, Aleist set off from the academy towards the temple on the borderlands. As a countermeasure against the war event he had recalled a few days ago, Aleist thought he would take up an advanced job. Endorsing and tagging along, Rudel came with little baggage as he walked behind Aleist.

They had taken a carriage from the academy to a nearby village, but as the temple was on a mountain, they would have to climb it. Aleist was short of breath from his heavy load as he trudged on up.

But Rudel looked at Aleist and offered a word.

“I should’ve brought something heavier to train too.”

“Just to let you know, I’m not dragging along this heavy baggage for training purposes or anything like that! Make light of mountain climbing, and it really will be dangerous... I was seriously in tears when I came a few years ago.”

Recalling his self from a few years back, Aleist was moved to tears. He had brought his feet to the temple hoping to receive the grace of an advanced job, but without any proper equipment for mountain climbing, he had gone through quite a trial.

In-game, you didn’t require any special mountain climbing equipment. Or so he continued mumbling to himself.

“This much is nothing, right? I don’t think you need such grandiose equipment. Just look around Aleist, there are birds I’ve never seen before.”

Walking behind Aleist, Rudel climbed the mountain. Honestly, Rudel enjoyed mountain climbing quite a bit. Seeing Rudel happily spending his time behind him, Aleist thought.

(Why has Rudel come to such a place... it’s usually there for comrade strengthening events and the like. Wait, huh? In that case, does it mean Rudel is already my comrade?)

Feeling something was off about happily climbing a mountain with Rudel-one

of his goals-Aleist continued on towards the temple.

Lines of overgrown trees, the cries of birds they could hear from time to time through the warm glow of the sun, the two of them continued walking a few hours more... before their eyes was an old, unmaintained building that you could perhaps call a temple.

That temple in the heart of the mountain, with no one to manage it, it looked to Rudel as if it would simply rot away.

“This is the temple? It’s practically rotting away... what are we supposed to do here, Aleist?”

Aleist put down his bags and sat down on the spot. If the inside of the temple was the same as it had been a few years ago, then the whole place would be covered in dust so thick there was no place he could put down his bags and rest.

“We receive a prophecy here. You just have to wish to rise to a higher stage as you pray. If you do, the prophecy shall indicate the path you should go down, and if you want, you can change your class to an advanced job.”

“Then I’m going to choose dragoon.”

“No, dragoon is a special job, so you can’t become one here.”

“Why!? I don’t want to be anything besides a dragoon.”

“Again, it’s special, so it’s impossible. In the first place, when you don’t have a dragon, you can’t become a dragoon.”

Rudel seemed displeased, but since he’d come all the way here, he thought he would pray anyways. If praying would indicate the path he should treat, he thought it would show him the path to be a dragoon.

“There’s no helping it. Then I’ll ask what I’m lacking to become a dragoon...”

“Isn’t that obvious? You’re lacking a dragon... is Dragoon really that good? As an occupation, or rather job, it’s a bit half-assed, and the way you are, just becoming a high knight will make you plenty strong.”

Aleist tried asking what had intrigued him for so long. Rudel was strong. Magic, swordplay and martial arts, in all fields he was ranked at the top of the

academy, and in a simple battle, he was likely first in the academy... so Aleist thought.

“... Back when I was small, I saw a dragon fly across the sky. A splendid wind dragon of a deep emerald hue. Ever since I saw it, I couldn’t help but want one of my own. I want to ride a dragon and fly through the sky. Freely soaring... flying with a dragon who’ll contract with me is my dream.”

Rudel spoke of his dream. The dream he held onto from childhood...

“I don’t have any dreams. I just wanted to have a bit of fun in life. When I was a kid, I convinced myself I was strong, and that my future was secure. Maybe that’s why, I filled my heads with all sort of foolish ideals of heroes and harems.”

Aleist felt jealous of Rudel. The fact he simply continued to chase the dream he held from his youth was cool, and that he didn’t give up was amazing, he thought. On the other hand, he was...

“A harem? My father had a number of women, but I’ve never felt jealous looking at him. From time to time, father and mother would fight over it, see. Something about inheritance and such.”

“So harems really are most beautiful when left to dreams. I’ve heard women can be scary when push comes to shove...”

Aleist thought a bit. Could it be the harem he imagined was something that couldn’t exist? As he thought that, the elf Millia floated up in his head.

“I won’t deny it if it’s your dream, but don’t you like Millia?”

“N-no, well I do, but...”

(Millia likes yooooou.)

Aleist lamented in his heart. He had tried to use chocolate to get his feelings across on Valentine’s Day, but had failed. Not wanting to be the only one teased, Aleist shifted the subject towards Izumi.

“A-and what about you and Shirasagi? Everyone’s saying you two are like a married couple.”

Hearing that, Rudel made a bit of a happy, yet somewhat sorrowful face.

“I can’t be with Izumi. I want her to be happy, so I’ve been telling her to rely on Luecke or Eunius’ house... the two of them acknowledged it, but Izumi’s a stubborn one.”

“That’s irrelevant! If you like her, then just say you do! As you are now, you’re just running away.”

Aleist was a reincarnator who lacked any recognition of himself as a noble. He didn’t quite understand what Rudel was saying, but with his modern era sense, he thought that as long as there was love, things would work out one way or another.

Izumi’s house was one attempting to flee to Courtois from their homeland... either obtaining noble status and serving under another, or gaining some land of their own. Otherwise, it would be difficult for them to live on. It was for that sake that Izumi aimed to be a high knight, and she needed an influential noble backing her...

If she ended up dating Rudel, then status-wise, Izumi could only become a mistress. And Izumi’s house would enter the umbrella of the Arses House. There was nothing good to come of entering the falling umbrella of a falling house. And the House also had problems as a ruling power.

Aleist, who blurted it out without even considering such things, was surely a man who couldn’t read the mood. Rudel could have gotten angry... but his heart was warmed as Aleist got so worked up for his sake. He sent a bitter smile as he spoke.

“You may be right... it’s about time we started off. If we don’t hurry up, the night will fall before we can get back.”

“Do you really get it...”

Grumbling complaints as he stood, Aleist left his bags where they were as he walked towards the temple. In his hand, he gripped only a few small items he had pulled from his belongings.



Giving the temple altar a simple sweep, he lit the candle with a magic flame and placed the offerings he had brought with him. Filled with dust and spider

webs, the temple's insides were filthy.

"Is that offering really enough? It doesn't look like the right price to hear out a prophecy."

Seeing Aleist start into the preparations, Rudel also did some light cleaning, but seeing the offerings Aleist had brought along, he grew anxious. The altar was lined with the sort of sweets a child might like.

"This is fine. The goddess here loves sweet things."

As the form of a goddess in Rudel's mind collapsed, the prayers began. Rudel began praying a step behind.

(Please give me an advanced job, oh blessed goddess. I brought you the chocolate you love so much, so...)

(Please tell me how I can become the strongest dragoon, blessed goddess...)

As if to answer their prayers, the inside of the temple was enveloped in light as a semi-transparent glowing goddess appeared over the altar.

"A-amazing."

Rudel gave his honest thoughts upon seeing the goddess. His crumbled image repieced itself somewhat, but seeing the assembled sweets disappear at a rapid pace, it fell apart once more.

'Come hither and I shall bestow a prophecy unto thee. If yonder lad of golden hair doth devote himself to the martial way, I shall open thee the path of the Black Knight...'

"W-what? I've never heard of that job before!"

As Aleist began thinking over the words black knight, the time came for the prophecy to be bestowed upon Rudel.

'And for thy other child of man... you shall take with thee the path of the White Knight. From today henceforth, you shall name yourself White Knight and live such that you never bring shame to thy noble name. "

"No... I want to become a dragoon, so I have to refuse that White Knight bit."

Perhaps due to his crumbled image, he spoke without any fear.

‘Eh!? ... White Knight is one of the strongest jobs, and the highest order of holy knights...’

“Change, change me to dragoon.”

As the hesitating goddess held her head, her eyes sought salvation from Aleist. But Aleist’s hands were full with his own matters.

“Why!? The job that comes after magic swordsman is supposed to be hero”

‘No, um, it’ll be troubling to me if you refuse.’

As the goddess turned back to Rudel with a troubled look on her face, she started thinking over just how she was supposed to convince the individual before her eyes.

Chapter 55: The Goddess and the Black Fog

‘Now listen here, you two. Prophecies are holy things you cannot refuse once you receive. What’s more, White Knight and Black Knight are jobs that tread into the domain of the divine, the strongest jobs any human could hope to obtain.’

Suddenly sat down on a bench in the temple, the food and water they brought placed on the table between in front of them, Rudel and Aleist received a lecture from the goddess. On their unprecedented displeasure towards her prophecy, she sat on the bench in her half-transparent state as she tried to persuade them.

“Even if you tell me that, I’m going to become a dragoon, so this white knight thing is just a bother.”

As Rudel still didn’t seem satisfied, the goddess was troubled to no ends.

“... In the first place, even if we’re forced into a job by a goddess who comes out with candy, you know. More importantly, shouldn’t I normally be getting the strongest ‘Hero’ job?”

As Aleist was stuck up on the hero part, he gave an explanation of the perks.

“You want to be a hero so badly, Aleist?”

“I definitely want Hero! Hero is generally the strongest class. They can elevate the abilities of the party as a whole, and they have their own unique magic and special skills. Unlike status up and down magic, on top of being able to use special effects, they’re perpetually active skills that don’t even use up any mana.”

Seeing Aleist explain full of confidence, the goddess spoke as she ate up the food on the table Aleist had brought in.

“? There doth already be a hero out there, so I cannot prophesize another.”

“Oh my.”

“Say what!?”

Surprised as she was at the two's reactions, the goddess went on.

‘There is already a hero. And for Hero and White Knight and Black Knight, there can only be one in the world. These three existences hold such power that their numbers are limited. So just accept it already.’

Aleist held his head. In the game, the protagonist was the only one who could become a hero, and it was a necessary job in order to fight the last boss. On a challenge run, he had been able to clear the game while remaining a magic knight, but after coming to this world, Aleist's reality left him full of anxiety.

So there, Aleist asked the goddess about the white and black knights.

“White Knight and Black Knight? They didn't exist in the game, but what sort of classes are they?”

‘White Knight be the title of holy knight bestowed onto only the most virtuous of warriors. Black Knight doth be the remnants of a knight who wields about thy powerful abilities... the two jobs are fated to contest one another, and history speaks of many an intense conflict between them. By the way, this country was one raised by a black knight who attained victory.’

Surprisingly enough, it seemed that Courtois was a country founded by a Black Knight. It didn't feel bad to be called a virtuous warrior, but after hearing that much, he ended up asking the goddess.

“In that case, will becoming a White Knight have me shunned from the country? I want to become a dragoon in these lands... I think I really will turn down the White Knight position.”

‘That is all in the past, so it is no problem! And the White and Black Knight of the time were brothers. The maddened younger brother turned Black Knight, while the older brother did try to save him and failed. Born of the same house, ‘twas the tragedy of two brothers whose talents turned to wrath... the mere remembrance makes a fair maiden of me...’

As the goddess hung her head, the two tried sending some gentle words to her.

“Did something happen? Izumi told me that talking takes a load off your mind, so why don't you tell us?”

“No, it might be something we’re not supposed to hear. Mrs. Goddess, if it’s too painful, you don’t have to...”

‘The sorrowful competitions of those two dashing brothers... me and my fellow goddesses would place bets every day on who was going to win. Arguing over who was the giver and who was the receiver, those were some good memories.’

The two of them were fed up at the goddess’ slackening smile. While saying her prophecies were absolute, by the very fact she was lured by candy into giving them, could it be she wasn’t anything too powerful to begin with? Even Rudel was growing irritated.

“Putting this goddess’ memories aside, I want to become a dragoon. So I’ll pretend I never heard about this White Knight tale. Let’s go, Aleist.”

“Eh!? What am I going to do with my Black Knight!?”

Grabbing Aleist’s arm, Rudel tried to leave the temple, when the half-transparent goddess grabbed his legs to stop him. But perhaps she was lacking in strength, as she was only pulled along by Rudel’s stride... Her initial attitude dying away, she was gradually bursting into normal conversation.

“Please wait! That would be troubling! My objective is to lead those who receive my prophecies. If I cannot do that, the other goddesses will laugh at me!”

“I understand your circumstances, but this is one thing I cannot concede! If it’s anything else, I might concede, so I’ll have you take back your White Knight Prophecy.”

“Rudel, my Black Knight too... more importantly, the Goddess’ tone is strange. She was quite a popular one in game, so I’m kinda disappointed here...”

When she bestowed a divine prophecy, they both wanted her to take it back. She didn’t know why, but the goddess was growing discouraged. In-game, one would find themselves in her care a number of times to change jobs, and from her word use and attitude, she was popular as the, ‘Granny’. While semi-transparent, her gold hair grew to her back, and her abundant breast put her in the top ranks of the game.

Her appearance was in her teens, but her words and attitude gave her the pet name granny... yet even so, she enjoyed her own popularity niche.

Aleist had even felt some secret dissatisfaction that she was never a capture target, but perhaps cooled by the goddess' attitude, he had lost interest.

'It's not like I'm doing this because I want to! In the first place, it's because the Black Knight blamed the White Knight's death on me that this temple fell to decline, and after the Black Knight died, no one ever came... I'm lonely!!! I want people to respect me! I want to bestow the greatest of jobs! And yet, and yet...'

His heart hurting at the crying goddess Rudel stopped his feet and tried talking to her again... it had already grown dark outside, and he was considering spending the night at the temple.

As talks started back up, the goddess had completely lost her initial olden tone. All that was left was a girl using words appropriate for her age.

"So after you've given a prophecy, we can't change our jobs anymore?"

Rudel soothed the goddess, and after talks started up, they learned the goddess before their eyes barely had any abilities. No abilities, or rather, the goddess could only convey the inevitable.

"In the game, you could cancel, though..."

Even if he joined in on the conversation Aleist used words they couldn't comprehend, so both Rudel and the goddess were learning to ignore him.

'Yeah. My role is only to deliver the verdicts of a higher existence, I don't actually change jobs. And, the first people to come in so long denied me, so... urrgh.'

The goddess started crying again, and this time Aleist questioned her.

"In the game, you let me choose an occupation, and explained what was lacking, right? And when I came here a few years ago, you let me become a Magic Knight as I asked. Can't you do something about it this time?"

'... In your case, there were paths besides the magic knight one laid out before you, so I just guided you towards the one you wanted. But this time, Black Knight's all you've got, my condolences.'

Sticking her tongue out, she nailed it coldly into Aleist. It seemed the goddess had a low evaluation of him.

“What’s with you, when you’re just a candy-loving granny!”
‘You said it again! You called me a granny twice. Last time you came, you called me granny and mocked me too. That’s why you can’t get a woman!’
“D-don’t make fun of me! Even like this, I’ve been confessed to a number of times these past few months. I’m not like you!”
‘But the girl you do like has no interest in you, right? I heard your conversation in front of the temple!’

“... Hah, calm down, you two. More importantly, about White and Black Knights. This is one thing I cannot concede. Becoming a dragoon is my dream.”

“If I don’t become a hero, I’ll likely die in the near future. I’ll lose to the imperial prince.”

The imperial prince Aleist spoke of was Askewell. The inhuman prince trying to bring ruin to the kingdom... that was the last boss of the game, and the true colors of Askewell Aleist knew.

‘Now listen here, you’ve both already received your prophecies, so you’re a White Knight, and you’re a Black Knight in training! There’s no way for you to change it! As long as you both obey fate and fight one another, there won’t be a problem. So act like gentlemen, gracefully accept it, and have it out on each other.’

“We have no real reason to fight. And no matter how hard you push it onto me, I’m aiming to be a dragoon.”

Arguments continued within the temple, and as their unproductive quarrels went on, they didn’t seem like they would be reaching a conclusion anytime soon. But the dim temple interior filled with an air of unrest. A black fog burst from Rudel and Aleist’s feet, the darkness extinguishing the light of the candle. With the light out, the faint glow of the transparent goddess was all that remained to illuminate the halls...

‘What’s with this fog? I don’t know anything about it!’

While she tried to shake it off, the black fog held a will as it coiled around the

goddess. And a woman's voice resounded through the temple

'She may be a no-good goddess, but she has ample uses. While she doesn't boast much power, the very fact she is a goddess being her only redeeming feature, I shall make a marionette of her.'

'Don't joke around. Even like this, I'm a goddess...'

'A goddess without a name. Your role is merely to relay to humans events long determined, a messenger that falls short of a pigeon on the streets. And see where that's led you... the humans you told shall not follow your orders. The goddess of a rotten temple unable to fulfill her minimum responsibilities, and you still think you're necessary?'

The black fog's words silenced the goddess. Right, this goddess' name did not exist in the game. She didn't even have a setting. For she was a convenient goddess who would only appear when changing jobs...

'B-but I am...'

The goddess' semi-transparent eyes quivered. Her heart swayed as she thought over what the fog had to say. She had thought over the reason of her own existence many times before. Imparting one's job was her role, but humans would choose their own path and ascend to that position themselves.

Like Rudel there were those who chased their dreams, and those who gave up would become what was left. There were some who earned their occupations without even thinking about it. There were various sorts, but humans would find their place in life without going through her.

In this fallen temple, her existence was one only to wait for the time she eventually rotted away. Was she really a goddess? Without a name, and without even any to revere her... wouldn't it be fine if she didn't exist at all?

"Isn't this bad?"

As Aleist was left only able to listen to the conversation of the goddess and the fog, Rudel quietly lent an ear to their exchange. If there was any difference, it was that he was able to hear them out without panic.

Rudel thought. The black fog aiming for him, just what could it be... this fog that spoke of the world, couldn't it be involved with some sort of larger

existence? Rudel thought as he watched over the goddess.

The way things were, his voice wouldn't reach. Rudel gripped the hilt of the sword Basyle had given him as a present.

'Thou, you, she who cannot decide herself is a goddess? Didn't you ever think it strange? Weren't there times you ever questioned it? You were never such a noble existence. You were only ever a half-transparent part of the system.'

'S-system? I-I, thy, thou art... ha aHAAaaa!!!'

Once the black fog had completely gathered around the goddess, a light tempest blew through the temple. The benches were destroyed as they flew through the air, and the few ornaments remaining on the altar were smashed.

After a while, not in her teens, twenty-year-old black-haired goddess's blue eyes turned pale as she gave a grin and turned towards Rudel and Aleist.

"I don't really mind if you target me, but stop dragging in irrelevant people."

'Irrelevant? Are you an idiot... when it's your fault everything has gone amiss, when all you've done is steal away all that one was supposed to obtain!'

The goddess that had gained real substance from her semi-transparent form let out the black fog's voice from her mouth. But once she had said that much, Aleist walked up in front of Rudel.

"I can't stay hiding behind someone's back forever!"

Pulling his sword, Aleist channeled magic into it. Once his blade was clad in flames, Aleist took a step towards the goddess possessed by black fog.

Chapter 56: The Boar, the Bird, and the Black Fog

The goddess without a name taken over by the black fog stood against Rudel and Aleist in that rotting temple. As Rudel tried to pull his sword, Aleist pulled his first and walked out up front. Because of the possessed goddess, the temple was in shambles, and the obstacles such as benches had practically disappeared.

It was easy to move around, but they were still within a room. There was only one entrance, and they'd face considerable trouble on a retreat. As the two didn't know what sort of attacks this goddess had, while Aleist had stepped out in front of Rudel, he was unable to step back.

"Are you the same as that bird we saw before? Not that it has anything to do with it. I can't stay a coward forever!"

Aleist clad the sword in his right hand in flames. What's more, at such a high output, the temperature within the temple leapt up all at once. Judging he would be a hindrance, Rudel leapt back to watch over Aleist and the possessed Goddess.

'Using a magic sword? What an artless man. How idiotic it is, to think I went through so much trouble for this man. But my objective is Rudel's murder, and that is irrelevant to the will of the world! I'll kill you and then Rudel!!!'

"Don't make light of me!"

Aleist rapidly approached the goddess floating in the air. He tried lowering his magic sword at her, but the goddess caught the blade in her left hand. Perhaps intrigued by Aleist's face of surprise, the goddess gave a full grin. Letting her feet touch the ground, she used powers unthinkable from her appearance to throw Aleist and his sword aside.

Rudel circled around to catch Aleist, only to notice there weren't any traces of a burn on the goddess' left hand.

"S-sorry."

"Aleist, that one is dangerous. Even after taking on magic flames barehanded,

she got out without any burn.”

“... Even so, I can’t step down.”

At Rudel’s cautionary words, he looked at the goddess in surprise, and sure enough, she was completely uninjured. Even so, Aleist stood, and tried facing her alone.

‘You still cannot understand? Comprehend the fact that someone of your level has no chances of victory. I have no interest in your life... so abandon Rudel and leave.’

The Goddess slowly sauntered towards Aleist. But Aleist took a deep breath as he regripped his sword and took a stance.

‘Even if she’s just a system, this body is that of a goddess’. Do you truly understand that?’

“And what of it!?”

Aleist invoked magic on his left hand as he swung the sword in his right. His sword was blocked by the goddess but his left hand’s magic was hammered right into her body.

‘It’s futile. Magic has no effect on this body. This body was one manifested of magic, and I merely added a physical form. So I can even do something like this.’

The goddess gathered magic in her left hand in the same way Aleist had. But the scale greatly exceeded his. As an inferno gathered around her left, its intensity set the temple’s interior ablaze.

“So magic damage is nulled. And that’s why you thought nothing as you took that previous attack? In that case, you’re nothing special at all... that one was special magic. It’s a special magic that lets me break your defenses temporarily for a second attack.”

Surprised as he was at the goddess’ magic, he put up a stiff smile as a bluff as he explained. It was a special attack useable by the existences called magic knights. For the next turn alone, it would destroy a null-magic barrier. It was a magic only possible within the interface of a game.

‘And what of it? Do you think you can take down this body with but a single

attack? That is a problem I need not even calculate. You fail to understand the difference in ability between us.'

"... That so?"

The goddess turned her left hand towards Aleist. Within all of that, he prayed that his plan would succeed as she awaited her attack. Sure enough, his own attacks wouldn't afford too much damage, but what about hers? And Aleist used a magic he rarely ever used in his playthroughs before his reincarnation.

"Counter!"

'Oh?'

As the magic was fired, Aleist cast a magic to reflect it. The reason he rarely used that magic was because the game rarely pit players against enemies of higher level. As romance was the main theme of the game, its combat was somewhat lax.

And there was another reason he didn't like using it.

'So you placed your bet on that magic with its low success rate? As I thought, you're just a kid who falls short of his own abilities.'

Whether Aleist's bet succeeded or failed, the goddess knew it wouldn't be a problem, as she waited to see its result. Before an absolute difference in ability, the goddess had some interest in how the world would move. Surely Aleist wouldn't die in a battle with her. No, perhaps she would be the one dying by some twist of fate. Such feelings of resignation ruled over the goddess.

She looked at Aleist with such sentiment. And Rudel also looked over the battle of the two, noticing the slight resignation in the goddess' expression.

As if the result had already been decided, Aleist's counter succeeded. That powerful magic turned its fangs towards the goddess, and she didn't even try to avoid.

"Did you see that!?"

Sent flying by her own magic, the goddess destroyed the altar as she collapsed into it. Face-down on the ground, she restored her burning body, and not to Rudel or even Aleist, she questioned the world.

‘You’ll do that much to get rid of me? When you’re the one who birthed me, you’ll even deny the very reason you gave me to live!? If I try to kill Rudel with absolute power, you’ll put the existence called Aleist before him... am I really so unnecessary!!!?’

The black fog was no more than a stagehand birthed by the plot to move the story alone. An existence to move for Aleist’s sake in the background and get in Rudel’s way. The same entity had taken over the boar, the bird, and the goddess. The fact that was one a single existence had multiplied to so many was proof of how Rudel had altered fate.

The possessed goddess’ white eyes turned to black as black tears began to lead out.

‘So even the last of us that remains cannot fulfill our desire...’

“What are you talking about?”

Aleist’s understanding couldn’t catch up to the goddess’ cry. In that blazing temple, Rudel started walking towards the goddess. He pulled the sword he received from Basyle. The sword forged from the tusk of the first black beast he encountered. It was Rudel’s sword born of that tusk melted down with iron.

A little long for a one-handed sword, with its ornaments kept to a minimum, it was a straight sword made with battle in mind. Feeling the mana that leaked from its blade, the goddess started laughing again.

‘I see, so it’s true! My loss was decided from the very beginning. That blade is a portion of my body, and a weapon even capable of harming this goddess’ body. It does seem the world plans to keep you alive until that time is to come... now, kill me, Rudel!’

Without directing his sword, Rudel closed his eyes.



It happened a little before. As Rudel watched the battle between the two unfold, he was troubled.

He was watching over Aleist clash with the goddess when he noticed his new partner, his sword was shaking. Almost as if it were reacting to the goddess, no,

to the black fog, it quivered.

(What's this? Something's happening.)

'My role may be over, but I cannot let my comrade face such an end... I'm in no position to ask you, but could you cooperate with me to the end? If you do, you shall be free from our... from my partition.'

He heard the deep voice of a man. What pieced together in his head was the form of the boar he had seen back in his years of fundamental education. That demon of ferocious, rampaging black bulk and white crest.

The last bit of will left in the tusk was trying to save the black fog, the offshoot of itself that had changed to such an extent.

'If you use me, you can harm that one's body. As you are now, you could defeat her with ease.'

(You won't save your comrade?)

'Saving would mean to free that one from her mission. As I've fulfilled mine own, all that remains is for me to disappear, but my partition's mission is to stop you. But you will not give up, will you? Then you must save my partition, my other half. Put an end to the mission she shall never complete.'

As Rudel was thinking hard, Aleist's gamble paid off, and the Goddess let out a cry as she flew through the air. Hers was the form of the defeated who couldn't win against fate no matter how hard they tried.

Rudel focused himself as he walked forward. Making his resolve, he pulled his blade and walked towards her.



Holding his sword up high, Rudel channeled his magic into it. And he thought.

(Will it really end with her defeat? The defeat of an existence who'll lose simply because it is fate? No... that's not something I can accept.)

Seeing Rudel, the goddess-turned-monster closed her eyes, convinced her final moments had come. But the last chime never struck. In exchange, she sensed something close to herself, causing her to hurriedly open her eyes. Nostalgically, she stared at her form before she separated with longing and

sorrow.

“W-what’s with these guys!? Rudel, just what did you do!?”

What Aleist saw in that burning temple were two monsters standing to Rudel’s side. One of them he knew. Aleist noticed it was the bird from back then. But he had no memory of the other boar monster.

‘Aaah, it’s me. The me before I split anew.’

The goddess reached out her hand towards the approaching boar and bird monsters. While they differed in form, their black bodies and white symbols marked them out as comrades in arms.

‘It’s already the end, my other half. Our role is over.’

‘Now return to the beyond. Once we are one, you won’t be alone anymore.’

‘Once I’ve come so far, you’ll tell me to give up!? If we all band together, we can even defeat Rudel. We can fulfill our duty, can we not... and yet, and yet, why are even my own selves ignoring me to try and save him!?’

The goddess shed black tears, but as the boar and bird bodies grew close, she noticed. Those other halves were transient forms given shape by Rudel’s mana...

‘So in the end, I won’t be able to fulfill my role.’

Reaching out her hands to embrace the ghastly boar and bird, the goddess tried to relinquish her consciousness. But there, Rudel called out.

“Are you fine with it ending, just like that? Leaving with you all the losers to fate?”

‘We cannot win over the will of the world. You may have changed your destiny, but it is impossible for you to change your end.’

‘You will surely understand someday. The world will definitely bring you to your fate in the way it desires.’

Rudel couldn’t feel satisfied with the boar or the bird’s answer. He’d run into walls a number of times. Each time, his efforts would grant his wishes, would someday get him recognized, he believed.

“Is my destiny determined? But even so, I want to become a dragoon! That’s

all I have! That all I... I'll surpass any destiny. It's for that sake that I've worked so hard to this point. If I give up, then that's the end."

Hearing those words, a dumbfounded Aleist's heart began to hurt. Rejoicing that he was able to reincarnate, he had come to the misunderstanding that he was strong. Yet the existence he had only ever seen as a stepping stone held such a will and had gone through so many troubles. He understood it now not in his head but his heart.

"Rudel, you're..."

'How shameless. When it's because of you we were born and exist. But if you are to fight your fate... the world to your end, then I'll help you. I don't mind helping you out until your time has come.'

'What are you saying? Have you gone mad!?'

'Save that one? That doesn't sound like our mission.'

Hearing Rudel's words, the goddess made a proposal. On that unexpected proclamation, the boar and bird voiced their objections.

To the words of her other selves, she smiled and held up a hand to quiet them. All the goddess, the black fog knew was that Rudel was yet another like them attempting to fight against the setting of the world. A sensation that the enemy she was supposed to fight was fighting her same battle...

'Rudel, if you will continue to fight your fate, I will lend you a hand. However, if you are unable to oppose, simply swept up in fate's flow... the moment you give up, I'll kill you.'

"Do what you will. I'll definitely never give up."

'Do not forget those words. The world will get in your way, and you'll surely never find a dragon of your own. I'll help you through that trial. So forget not, the moment you give up is the moment you die.'

Rudel overreacted at the words that he wouldn't get a dragon, but at the words of the black fog surrounding the goddess, a smile accompanied Rudel's surprise. It was almost like the smile of a young boy.

"You will!?"

‘... What a simple one. Then I must be off...’

Once the black fog parted from the goddess, it spread over the temple’s interior to steal the vision of those present. And once Rudel and Aleist could see again, the original blond goddess was stark-naked, collapsed on the ground. The temple was wrapped in flames on the verge of collapse.

You could praise it for holding out so long throughout the intensity of the battle between Aleist and the goddess, but Rudel and Aleist hoisted the goddess up and hurriedly raced to the exit.

At practically the same time as they leapt out, the temple collapsed. The impact caused her to open her eyes. Having attained a physical form from her semi-transparent state, the goddess lifted her stiff body. And she saw. The collapse of the temple erected to revere her...

“H-hey!!! What’s all this then!!?”



Rudel and Aleist were kneeling before the former goddess. Perhaps the sun was already on its way up, as the area was gradually growing brighter.

“What do you think you’ve done, you blasphemers!? Give me back my temple, give it back!”

The two who kneeled before the naked, crying goddess boldly looked at her form. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say they couldn’t avert their eyes. With her being a former goddess and all, it’s not as if you couldn’t say her form wasn’t divine. No, perhaps they were just excited looking at a woman’s form, and it just looked like that.

“B-but, listen. The one who destroyed it was you.”

Still locking eyes with the goddess’ body, Aleist refuted. Rudel definitely did feel bad for her, but on top of being possessed, this candy-loving goddess held no dignity.

“And no one ever came to begin with, right? What’s more, now that you’ve got a body of your own, it’ll be difficult to make a living way out here.”

“What’s that? Is making excuses all you’re good for, you blasphemers!? Even

if I've gotten a body, I'm a being of... h-huh? Why am I naked!? What's more, you both saw me naked, you perverts!"

This time the goddess burst into tears at her body being seen, and Aleist handed over some of his preserved food rations. Taking it as if snatching it away, the goddess ate as she complained.

"Don't think this is enough to clear away my resentment. I'll haunt you until you atone for this."

What she said pretty much classified her as an evil spirit. On her tone and attitude, the two boys lost interest, stood and started on their way back.

"W-where are you going?"

"We're students so we have to go back to school. We've been in your care. I'll definitely rebuild your temple, so just wait here."

"I couldn't become a hero, and I don't think I have any more business here."

On those words, the goddess' faint heart shattered. Leftovers of her meal around her mouth, she leapt at Rudel's feet and held on.

"Don't leave me behind! I don't want to be alone in such a lonely place."

As the goddess clung and wept, Aleist sighed.

"Weren't you always here alone? And we're going to the academy, so we can't bring any pets."

"Who're you calling a pet!? Even like this, I'm a goddess. And we goddesses occasionally get together, so I'm not a loner! But with this body, I can't go to that place, so I really will be aloooooonnnne."

"... What should we do, Aleist?"

"No, even if you ask me..."

"Don't abandon me! I'll do anything, so just don't abandon me!?"

The three at their wits' end spend a good deal more time thinking on the spot.



Returning to the academy, Rudel and Aleist ended up arriving much later than

scheduled. It was because they were looking after the goddess who obtained a body in a nearby village. And having returned to the academy, the two of them introduced the goddess to the usual members.

“... And that’s how it is, so we’ll be looking after this goddess. Say hi.”

Once Rudel finished explaining everything, the goddess in village girl clothes lowered her head. Once she raised it, she spoke with a smile.

“I’ll be in your care!”

Everyone was too surprised to say a word. Rudel and Aleist had gone out saying they would become stronger, but once they came back, they were taking along a slightly-younger girl. Even those who hung around with them on a regular basis, Izumi, Luecke, and Eunius couldn’t react.

(What should I do, there’s no way I could’ve imagined something so out of the blue. I had thought perhaps he may come back with a dragon, but... for him to return with a goddess(?), could it be I’m lacking in imagination?)

Izumi was surprised Rudel had gone even beyond her expectations.

(That’s why I was against Rudel and Aleist taking action together! Just look, I completely fail to comprehend the results of the oblivious pair working together!)

Luecke seemed fed up at the two who led along a girl claiming to be a goddess. Finally, Eunius thought.

(I should’ve gone too.)

And as that dubious air flowed by, Aleist muttered. Unable to read the mood, Aleist was unable to understand why everyone around was so confused. He had spoken of the events in the temple, but he had no idea that goddesses were something that normal people would never usually meet.

“Huh? What’s up with everyone? You don’t like the souvenirs we brought back?”

With the peculiar local ornaments Rudel and Aleist had chosen out in their hands, the three of them cried out.

“That’s not the point!”

“Are you an idiot!?”

“They definitely are strange...”

Chapter 57: The Former Goddess | Part 1

This is the tale of a young girl who was no longer a goddess.



Rudel mulled over how to treat the former goddess who had come to the academy. If he simply left her at the ruins of the temple, she would die, and having lost her godessly abilities and mana, the young girl had no means to survive. Looking no more than fifteen, her beautiful blond hair, and body you could call art were splendid, but their contents were much too unfortunate.

At present, she was eating in the boys' dorm cafeteria, dangerously wielding her spoon and fork to eat as she sullied the area around her mouth. Ever since she obtained a body, the goddess had faced numerous problems. The reason Rudel and Aleist had taken so much time lay in how difficult it was to look after her.

"Oy, granny over there, why are you spilling so much? The table and your clothes are a mess."

Aleist looked at the former goddess as he cautioned her, and the goddess tried to do something about it... but once that proved hopeless, she gave up and talked back.

"S-shut it. And you're not looking after me anyways. The one looking after me is Rudel."

Right, ever since the former goddess obtained a body, it was mostly Rudel looking after her. Aleist had no experience in child rearing, but Rudel had looked after his stepsister Lena before.

"I'm fine with looking after you, but more importantly, what are you going to do when I'm in class? We're going off to class now."

Rudel flipped through a book titled, 'Training your Dog', as she asked the former goddess. The goddess only knew the word class as its dictionary definition, so she tilted her head in wonder.

"Can't I just follow you?"

On those words, Luecke-who didn't believe she was a former goddess-answered.

"You're not a student of the academy, so you can't take part in classes. More importantly, why don't you decide a name soon? On top of it being hard to address you, it's painstakingly annoying to explain to other people."

Eunius was eating his breakfast, and he didn't seem very interested in the former goddess. Perhaps dissatisfied with the attitudes of the four boys, the former goddess stood from her seat and wept as she protested.

"Even I'm getting tired of saying former-goddess every time! Everyone makes a dubious face... isn't my beauty enough proof of my divine origins?"

She was definitely beautiful. If her mouth and clothes weren't soiled, she might even look divine. Rudel closed his book as he looked at the former goddess.

"Former goddess, sit down when you eat. And it's good manners to keep quiet, so you don't bother everyone around."

"Erk, got it."

"That's a good girl, good former goddess. Have a flan as a reward."

"Yippee!"

Saying that, Rudel presented his own desert flan. The former goddess rejoiced... Aleist looked between Rudel and the goddess, and the book in Rudel's hand as he muttered. He should have noticed something was off when Rudel was reading a book on dogs rather than dragons.

"You... Rudel's thinking of you as a dog, you know."

The goddess froze half-way through her delicious flan.



"What's with those blasphemers!? I don't need them, I can survive alone."

The former goddess angrily walked through the campus. Before Rudel and the others could head off for class, she finished up her flan and ran out of the dining hall. Her mouth and clothes still dirty... The academy staff saw from the card

hanging at her neck that she was authorized by the Arses house, and stopped themselves from cautioning her.

“Very well, I’ll show them. I’ll make it all by myself.”

And like that, the former goddess knew the first thing she needed was a place to sleep. She didn’t know why, but the card she got from Rudel hanging at her neck let her get into mostly everywhere. Using it, the former goddess tried to search out a place she could live. She didn’t have any interest in the finer rules of humanity, and she didn’t really understand what it meant to be at school.

“Let’s see... that building looks like a worthy temple to me.”

The goddess set out for the dwelling that didn’t reek of men, the girls’ dorm. As she approached, she was stopped at the entrance. The female knight on duty surrounded her with a number of female soldiers.

“What!? What’s all this!?”

“There are a few things I have to ask you, but first off, could you show me your ID?”

Panicked as she was, the former goddess handed over the card she got from Rudel. After the female knight wiped the grime off the card, she breathed a deep sigh and let the goddess into the dorm. Cautioning her not to make a mess.

While the female knight saw her off inside, a new soldier recruit asked in a perplexed tone.

“Umm, was that really alright? Letting that child into the girls’ dorm?”

“You’re new around here, are you? Listen well... these past few years, the girls’ dorm has been at peace. It’s all because the princess is here, but before that, those damn brats would always try to look for openings in our patrols and try to infiltrate. Now at this point, there’s only one man who’ll ever try to enter the princess-occupied girls’ dorm.”

“Eh!? There’s one who still breaks in!? That’s a huge problem, isn’t it? Before I was stationed here, they told me, you can harm low ranking nobles if need be, just prevent anyone from getting through.”

“... Rudel Arses. The eldest son of one of the three lords. He boldly enters the girls’ dorm through the front door.”

“That’s definitely strange. There’s no way such a thing would be permitted! The princess is here, so naturally, even the child of an archduke should receive considerably punishment!”

The new recruit let out a sound argument as she latched onto her superior’s tale, but the female knight spoke with a serious look on her face.

“You definitely can’t go against him. I’m not saying it because I fear his authority or might, that boy... Rudel-sama boasts a technique far scarier than any of that...”

Seeing her superior shake as she hung her head, the new recruit gulped down her spit. Just what could be happening in this academy... but outside the eyes of the recruit’s serious worries, her superior’s downcast face was just a little red.



“Despite how it looked from the outside, this place is full of small rooms. But the rooms are bigger in this area. It’s similar to the rooms around Rudel’s place, so I’m sure there are some extravagant ones around here... I’ll make one of them my own.”

The former goddess talked to herself as she walked. At the end of her path was Fina’s room, guarded by high knights. As the building held a similar make to the boys’ form, the former-goddess determined it was the best room and walked right up to it. Of course, she didn’t forget to flash the card she got from Rudel.

(This card really is amazing. All the people who don’t believe me no matter how I explain, they suddenly listen after they looked at this card... but it’s a bit vexing.)

“... Arses House!? W-wait just a moment. No, please wait.”

The high knight who looked at her as a suspicious person, upon seeing the card, her complexion suddenly changed as she rushed into the room. As she did, a few dreadful noises and footsteps came from within before the luxurious doors were slammed open with good momentum.

“Where’s master’s pet!? I’m sure it’s super fluffy and... flu... fy? Wait, fluff aside, all I see is a filthy woman. Sophina, what is the meaning of this?”
(I rushed when I heard we had a guest with a card saying she was master’s pet, but the only one here is a woman who’s mouth and clothes are all dirty... hah, what a let-down.)

As Fina expressionlessly burst out, the former goddess was surprised. But even in that situation, she felt irritated when Fina spoke ill of her.

“I am a goddess. Former as it may be... no matter how you look at it, isn’t that treatment just terrible? And what do you mean by pet...”

The former goddess tried to nail in her anger, but Fina wasn’t interested in the slightest as she struck up a conversation with Sophina.

“Meaning it’s that? He’s showing me his woman to tell me to give up on fluffadise? This must be a challenge from master.”

“You’re wrong, princess. Why are you interpreting it like that? It seems she’s involved with Rudel-dono in some way, and she might be of considerable status. It’s possible he left her with a message...”

“Don’t lie to me. Master would fail to read the mood and come to me directly if he wanted to say something. He’d never use such a roundabout... I see! So that’s how it is!”

Fina’s expressionless face suddenly turned to the former goddess. As the former goddess took it with surprise and fear, Fina made a grandiose declaration.

“You’re master’s new disciple! The fact you came to me, your senior disciple is proof that master told you to gauge your own abilities... very well, I’ll show you my true strength!”

“Wha-even like this, I’m a goddess, hey, wait, don’t strip me! If anything rips, Rudel will scold me!”

Fina attempted to strip off the former goddess’ clothes. Even in that situation, she remained expressionless, and feeling fear from her clothes suddenly being pulled away, the former goddess fled from the spot. Half in tears, her clothes only half-worn, she ran as fast as she could.

“What are you doing, princess!?”

“It’s just as you saw. And naturally, I won that one.”

(Hmm, what a trifling junior disciple I’ve gotten. Master must have knotholes for eyes... to take a child so unsuited to fluffing as his disciple, the day I surpass master might be closer than I thought.)

“That may have been Rudel-dono’s fiancée!”

On Sophina’s words, a huge jolt ran through Fina’s body.

“I-it couldn’t be...”

(Impossible. There’s no way master could have a fiancée! I mean, I pleaded to father, did all those dodgy deals, and spread rumors to crush his fiancée candidates! If that’s how it is, then I have no choice but to borrow the forbidden mother power or fluffadise will forever be a dream.)

A discouraged Fina. Noticing Fina act different than usual, she must be in love with Rudel... Sophina made no such misunderstanding.

(I’m sure this girls’ going to start something crazy again.)

Sophina was beginning to understand her lord.



Half in tears, the former goddess timidly walked the halls of the girls’ form. Unlike how she boldly carried herself at first, now she carefully searched out the exit. At times, she would see underdressed girl students walking around, and she would make sure not to be seen.

But one wrong turn in her flight from Fina, and she had ended up completely lost. At this point, even the former goddess didn’t know if she was crying because of Fina, or crying because she was lost.

“To hell with it all, making fun of me... I’ll get back on them someday.”

Making statements unthinkable from a former goddess, the former goddess walked towards what she hoped was the exit. But to that goddess, the true goddess descended.

“Hey, aren’t you Rudel’s...”

“Haau!”

The former goddess turned around to find Izumi with a kind look on her face. As they had been introduced at the start, the formed goddess remembered her face. On the appearance of the gentle Izumi, this time the goddess shed tears of gratitude. On the woman who looked like her goddess of salvation, the former goddess began to pray.

“M-my goddess.”

“Eh?”

As the former goddess put her hands together in prayer, Izumi spent a moment in thought.

Chapter 58: The Former Goddess | Part 2

The goddess looking for a dwelling, a little passed noon, she encountered Izumi in the girls' dorm. For the goddess who wept as she begged for salvation, Izumi wiped her mouth and put her clothes in the laundry. And it was there that the former goddess' stomach let out a magnificent roar.

This is the school story of such a goddess...



Dressing the goddess of growling stomach in her own clothes, Izumi led her to the girls' dorm cafeteria. The form of her leading the goddess by the hand made one imagine a parental figure. The former goddess nervously looked around as she showed interest in a dining hall different than the one in the boys' dorm.

"What's that!? They didn't have those cakes or sweets over there! The flan here even has whipped cream over it! Ah, but that cake looks nice too."

As the former goddess frolicked, Izumi gave a warm smile as she ordered a lunch set along with a cake. Unlike the boys' dorm, the food there was served with appearance in mind, with portions on the conservative side. But surprisingly, the most popular item on the menu was the heaping portion lunch set one wouldn't want to be caught eating in the world beyond.

The two found an empty table and took their seats. And as the goddess began eating, as expected, she soiled the area around her mouth.

"Over there, the taste is thick and the portions are plenty, but this isn't half bad... this cake is nice and sweet. The candy that Aleist kid brought doesn't hold a candle to it. From here on, I'll put a prerequisite on quality and... ah, I don't have a temple anymore."

As the goddess went through a cycle of delight and sorrow, Izumi occasionally stepped in to wipe off her mouth.

"I heard what happened from Rudel. I can't quite understand, but you've had your troubles... may I hear your name?"

"Name? ... Don't have one of those."

Her cheeks stuffed with cake, she continued chowing down as she answered. As she never had one from the start, perhaps she never attached much importance to it, and Rudel didn't try to decide a name for her. When she said that to Izumi, Izumi let out a sigh.

"How very like Rudel. I'll put in a word, but if you do ever remember your name, please tell me."

While Izumi still didn't understand Rudel's story or what it meant to be a former goddess, perhaps she was right. Who would ever think this young girl eating cake with her mouth all dirty was a goddess?

"It's already this late? I'm sorry, but I have to go to class, so I'll guide you to the exit. I'll give your clothes to Rudel tomorrow or so. And you can have what you're wearing right now."

From the former goddess' story, she learned that Rudel didn't prepare much clothing for her, so Izumi decided to give her some of her own. How kind... the former goddess' heart was moved as she was led to the girls' dorm entrance where she parted with the Izumi. Forgetting her original objective, her stomach was full and she was going sleepy.

"Is there anywhere I can sleep?"

Still fearful of Fina in the girls' dorm, the former goddess sat on a bench some distance from the dorm. Noon had gone by, but the sunlight was still pleasantly warm, the weather weighing down on her eyelids...

"Good night..."

She ended up falling asleep alone.



"H-huh? It's already evening! It's time for dinner!"

The former goddess woke to the sound of her own stomach, but the area was already beginning to grow dark. She had already forgotten her original objective, and she tried to return to the boys' dorm, but... as the area grew dark, the feel it gave of changed, leaving her lost once again.

"As I recall, you go down this path... no, but it could be this one too. Urrgggh."

The former goddess felt she would burst into tears again. But there, some demi-humans appeared to surround her. In the darkening campus, the eyes of the demi-humans that looked as if they glowed startled her. Looking around to see what was going on...

“Ah, this woman has master’s smell... what to do, I don’t think I can let this pass.”

“*Sniff*, that really is Rudel’s smell.”

“The smell of a strong male...”

Ness of the black cat tribe appeared as if emerging from the darkness, and this time girls of the tiger tribe began to saunter out. Ness’ scary statement with her suspicious face, and the tiger tribe women over two meters in height surrounding her. Perhaps frightened by their talks of smell, the former goddess trembled as she looked for her path of escape.

As she did, this time, white cat Mii looked at the former goddess as she spoke.

“Ah, this person is Rudel-sama’s pet who came by around noon. The princess said she was a junior apprentice, so we have to harshly drill in the pecking order. She was making quite a ruckus, so I remember it.”

I’m saved! The goddess thought, but the demi-humans reacted to the contrary.

“Pet!? When he already has a slave in me, such a woman stays by Rudel-sama’s side... unforgivable.”

“I see, so I simply have to defeat her and take her place.”

“Great thinking boss! You’re a genius.”

“That’s definitely strange! That idea was definitely a fail. More importantly, just what is Rudel-sama supposed to be!? What did he do for things to come to... hey, white cat, can’t you save me!?”

“... But the princess told me to be harsh on you...”

“What!? I-it couldn’t be you’re kin to that rude little girl!? She’s followed me all the way here... at this rate, I really will be killllleeeedd!!!”

“I won’t let you escape!”

“Chase her!”

“It’s hunting timeeee!!!”

Caring not for appearances, the former goddess fled. But the demi-humans, the women of the beastmen tribes were considerably fast on their feet, and even when the former goddess was running for dear life, they were gradually beginning to close the distance. What she recalled were the days when the people honored her, but by the black knight’s unjust resentment, the people all stopped coming to the temple... it all flashed by like a revolving lantern.

“Wat’s with you all!? Don’t get any closer!!!”

As if the heavens had heard out the former goddess’ plea, the demi-humans suddenly suppressed their bloodlust, slowing down the speed at which they gave chase. As the former goddess turned around in wonder, following Ness’ lead, the tiger tribe girls were beginning to get their clothing in order. With gestures as if they were mindful of their appearance. The former goddess looked around to see what was going on.

As she hadn’t come back, Rudel had come out to search for her, and he sotted him walking her way.

“So this is where you were. I was looking for you.”

“U-uwaaaah!!!”

The former goddess cried as she jumped at Rudel. And Rudel pet her on the head. Once Rudel noticed Ness and the others, he came to a misunderstanding. That these feline girls had guided the lost former goddess all the way here...

“It seems I’ve caused you some trouble. I really am grateful. I know this child is quite a handful, ”but you’ve really helped me out today.

Hearing those words, the demi-humans seemed delighted, and after exchanging a few more words with Rudel, they turned to leave. Rudel turned to look at the former goddess, but perhaps from relief, she had fallen asleep still clinging onto him. Lifting her up just like that, Rudel started off towards the boys’ dorm.



“A name?”

The former goddess had safely returned to Rudel's room. After finishing dinner, she jumped right into the bed there and leisurely relaxed. It was at that moment that Rudel spoke as if recalling something.

"That's right. No matter how you look at it, it's hard to address you. Izumi cautioned me on it... so I think it's time we decided your name."

Saying that, he showed the former goddess the name candidates put down on papers. The former goddess looked at the number of names, but she couldn't quite decide on her own. She hadn't used the very concept of names for a long time, but to start with, she couldn't understand letters. From when she was a goddess, her knowledge all came from what she saw and heard. But as a goddess, she was never taught.

For a goddess who would live an eternity, perhaps that would be fine, but this former goddess... perhaps she had grown conceited, as her knowledge load was lower than Rudel's. Rather, at the very point she couldn't read or write, she was considerably lacking in knowledge. Only learning what she liked, in her long years of storing information, it had become a bad habit.

"... I can't read. Read them to me, and if there's one I like, I'll make do with it."

"Are you really fine with that? Very well, then listen closely. I took in everyone's opinions, so first we have 'Granny' from Aleist, then we have, 'Useless' from Luecke, third we have 'Marin' from Eunius, and fourth we have 'Sakuya' from Izumi. Finally, I submitted 'Magamon'."

"Pass on Aleist! And the second is out of the question! Number three-Marin isn't bad at all."

"Yeah, apparently, it's the name of the number one at the shop Eunius goes to."

"Number 1? What does that mean?"

"It's a place where older women pour you wine and look after you. For the popular ones, I get the feeling he said you could spend a fortune for a night..."

Marin was a lady from the saloon Eunius frequented. Rudel courteously explained to the goddess how she had become his favorite lately. And as Rudel seriously went into explanations on how it was part of the night service

industry, the former goddess' face turned red as she refuted the name Marin with every fiber of her being.

"I-I'm a goddess! I haven't been tainted yet! Marin is rejected! It's definitely no good!"

"You think? Well if the one in question says that, then there's no helping it, but... I think it's something different from being tainted. How about Sakuya then? Since Izumi said it, I'll give my recommendation."

"It definitely is nice. But it doesn't fit my image, so I'll reject it. Since it's a name Izumi thought up, I'm hesitating, but images are important with goddesses, you know."

"Then that means you're Mogamon."

On Rudel's words, the former goddess jumped off the bed in protest. Why did it come to that? Her face seemed to say, but what's wrong? Rudel's face spoke as he looked perplexed at the former goddess' reaction.

"Why am I being forced into Mogamon!?"

"I told you to pick from the candidates. If the first four were no good, then naturally the last candidate is automatically selected. Good for you, Mogamon. Having a name is a good thing."

"In that case, give it a bit more thought before you put out the candidates!!!"

The former goddess and Rudel's debate continued a while more. And at the end, Rudel folded, and the former goddess' name selection was put on hold.

Chapter 59: The Protagonist and the Delinquents

Rudel and Aleist had safely (?) returned to the academy, but the jobs they received were not the ones they had planned for. While Rudel aimed to become a dragoon, he was now a White Knight, and it seemed someone had beaten Aleist to his planned Hero title, and he was on the road to become a black knight... on such an unexpected occurrence, the two of them began a search for documents through the academy archives.

The White and Black Knights were fated to fight one another. They had investigated while believing in the goddess' words, but the results showed a truth adequately betraying them.

"... Oy, flin for brains. These documents say things completely irrelevant to some fated battle."

Aleist glared at the former goddess from the mountain of books he had piled on his library desk.

"T-that's strange. But I've seen history with these very eyes, so my info is more precise than anything you can find in some book!"

The former goddess asserted she was right, but this time-surrounded by books just like Aleist-Rudel offered a correction.

"There are definitely records of a pair of brothers, White and Black Knights, fighting over various things around the founding of Courtois. But more than that, there are records that they got along fine before that. It says that inheritance rights and the pressure put on them by their surroundings became the cause of their dispute."

Rudel organized the book's contents on a piece of paper. He wrote about the knight called the White Knight, and the one called the black Knight.

The White Knight was a knight who carried with him sword and shield gleaming with light. The black knight held a sword in each hand, fighting with a double bladed style. Of course, that was only the fighting style of the White and Black Knights of the time, but as he gathered information, Rudel put down all

he could find.

“I-in the end, fate only cares about the results! I know I’m right, so just get to the fighting already and prove it! Ah, but that black knight over there is still in training. How pitiful.”

The goddess grinned as she emphasized the ‘in training’ part of Aleist’s title. Reacting to her words, Aleist slammed a volume against her.

“Shut it, you flan-for-brains former goddess! Now that you’ve been demoted from being a goddess, you’re just a plain incompetent. No, ever since Rudel started supporting you, you’ve done nothing but eat, so you’re even worse than that.”

“W-waaaah. Rudel, he’s making fun of me!”

While the former goddess clung to Rudel in tears, Rudel handed over the cake he had brought along. And patting her on the head, Rudel got back to work.

“You’re in a library, so be quiet both of you. Here, have a cake.”

“Yay!”

The former goddess dug into the delicious-looking cake. Seeing her form, Aleist thought.

(This damn granny former goddess is being tamed.)

Aleist also got back to work and looked into this and that, but he had some anxieties working with a class that didn’t exist in the game. Classes came with a general path to follow. If you started out as a magician and learned the sword, you’d become a rune knight, and if a knight took up magic, it would be the same.

If a magician continued down a magician’s path, they would earn the class grand magician. They would carry on the skills of the classes they passed through, but Aleist didn’t even know the traits of this unknown Black Knight class.

According to the documents, he was supposed to hold a sword in each hand and control the powers of darkness, but to Aleist, the hell are the powers of darkness!? Was all he could think. Growing so curious he could no longer hold

it, he tried asking the former goddess. But her answer was terrible.

“The one who glows like paaah and goes Pwaaaaah! Is the white knight, and the black knights makes the shadows go swuuuuuush, and all these pointy things come up.”

Neither Aleist nor Rudel could understand the former goddess' words. That's why they were looking into it on their own.

And what they were coming to understand was the history of Courtois' founding, but there weren't ever any White or Black Knights apart from the brothers who fought at the time. Or rather, it felt more like the Kingdom of Courtois wouldn't recognize them.

The Black Knight who founded the country was one thing, but the Black Knight's older brother was a White Knight. They had become the classes of royalty, so to speak, and the positions themselves had been deified. There was a bit of a problem in the fact that both Rudel and Aleist were oblivious to that fact, but Rudel's interest in non-dragon matters was light, and Aleist couldn't help but have a tendency to compare the feelings and information he got from playing the game to this world, so you could say there was no helping it.

“The reason it hasn't spread as a fairy tale is because it's the sacred founding of the kingdom? No, but in that case, on the contrary, it should be something well-spread.”

Aleist answered to Rudel's mutters.

“Did they want to cover up the fact this country was founded as a result of a brotherly feud? In that case, they only had to make the White Knight the bad guy, but if I had to say, the White Knight looks to be more in the right here.”

As the two of them thought, the former goddess who finished her cake explained with a triumphant look on her face.

“Hmm, the black knight was a real brother's boy, so he purged the hell out of anyone who would write a picture book depicting his big brother as the bad guy! That yandere air of his, me and my goddess friends seriously did a double take there.”

“H-how terrible.”

“You understand what a yandere is, Rudel?”

At their impressions, the former goddess started putting on airs and explaining the era. The two influential noble brothers who had gotten where they were by lifting one another up, and once a warring states period descended upon the continent, their talents did truly bloom.

“The two of them fighting at the vanguard truly was the coolest, I tell you! And after a while, the wars gradually began reaching their ends. Around that point, the brothers’ father was getting well in his years, and he wanted to choose an heir. As a precursor to the event, he came over to my place.”

“And that’s when you made them a White and Black Knight? And it was a while later that they started fighting one another. Doesn’t look like fate’s has anything to do with it.”

Rudel seemed to think there was no such thing as a feuding destiny. In contrast, Aleist held quite a different idea.

(Originally, me and Rudel were supposed to argue quite a bit. I was the protagonist, and Rudel was the stepping stool for such a man. Now you can almost say the opposite is true... could these classes be related to the game’s setting? In that case, you could say me and Rudel were destined to fight, at some point.)

After looking at Rudel’s face, Aleist put his thoughts on a temporary hold. He would surely face Rudel in a tournament to come, but he had no intentions of carrying out a fight to the death. So Aleist thought.

After that, he tried to continue pursuing his leads, but tired from making such a ruckus, the former goddess had fallen asleep on top of the desk. Rudel began putting books back as he spoke to Aleist.

“Let’s call it quits for today, Aleist.”

“Y-yeah.”

Aleist was finally beginning to notice the game’s events and this changing situation.



Around the time they had finished research into their own jobs, about a month had passed since they had returned. The conclusion they reached was to cover up the whole White and Black Knight matter.

There was no point in becoming overly conspicuous, and Rudel made a decision that having a job related to the founding of the country may end up twisting his future plans. Rudel wanted to become a dragoon, and Aleist didn't particularly want to stand out. Before anything to do with winning the war, Aleist had his own survival on his mind.

He wanted to avoid the Black Knight matter getting out, and having him sent off to a dangerous region. He truly wanted to avoid any further irregularities. He thought of nothing more than to fight the last boss and safely achieve victory.

"That aside, Aleist, you said you wanted to learn martial arts, didn't you?"

As Aleist was lost in thought, Rudel—who had been with him quite often as of late—called out. They were on the road towards the library. They had no more business with it when it came to their jobs, but they planned to use it as normal students.

"I definitely did say it, but I'll have to refrain from your cowardly fighting techniques. Why do you aim for the eyes so naturally? That's way too dirty."

"The one who taught me was a former mercenary. The movements have been drilled firmly into my body, so that alone I can't do anything about. Anyways, I went and looked for an individual skilled in martial arts that fit your demands. I have them waiting right over there."

Rudel was well prepared, but Aleist didn't quite trust him when it came to these sorts of things. It was the Rudel way to cause a problem whenever he tried to do something. His lack of ill intent only made it all the worse.

"... My request was a strong and cool martial art. And not something cowardly, I said I'd prefer something fair and square."

"Leave it to me! I guarantee they have considerably strong martial arts, and those skilled in them are earnest folk who hate cowardly means. Come out, everyone."

“Eh? Everyone?”

Saying that, Rudel called out the ones who would be instructing Aleist. They were fellow students, upperclassmen in their final years. Tall in stature, with bodies as if they were wearing an armor of pure muscle. Of fearsome features... the men of the tiger tribe. Their attire were some that brought to mind delinquents of the modern era, and they were a variety Aleist was bad at dealing with.

“We just have to train up this guy, right, Rudel-san? Once we do, I’ll have you fulfill your promise.”

The largest tiger man looked at Aleist before seeking confirmation from Rudel. Unable to swallow down this situation, Aleist could only nervously look around.

“Don’t worry, I’ve obtained Izumi’s acknowledgment. Once you teach Aleist martial arts, I’ll fight you, and if I lose, I promise I’ll become your master. I swear to honor that promise.”

Hearing Rudel’s words, Aleist latched onto the various strange things that came out.

“I-isn’t that strange!? Why is Rudel becoming your master if he loses!? Isn’t it usually the other way around, and wait, what’s with that promise!?”

The tiger men glared at Aleist and intimidated him.

“You cannot understand Rudel-san’s amazingness!?”

“Rudel-san is our messiah, you hear!”

“As if... as if someone like you could understand how we feel!”

“Lay off him, this matter is of vital importance to the continued existence of the tiger tribe. Aleist, was it? I won’t tell you to understand. But listen here... if you don’t make our techniques your own, then you’ll die, so prepare yourself you bastard!!!”

And just like that, Aleist was hoisted up and carried off by the tiger tribe men. Rudel saw him off with a smile and a wave of his hand.

“Do your best, Aleist.”

It's said at that time, Aleist saw the devil in Rudel.

Chapter 60: The Young Man and the Hero

Rudel woke up early every morning to carry out his training. After draping a blanket over the former goddess, her body spread grandly over the center of the bed, he took up his weighted wood sword and made for the courtyards. Lately, he had begun training with a wood sword made to imitate the weight and length of the blade Basyle had given him.

There were a number of reasons for that. Especially as of late... ever since he was professed as a White Knight, he felt power overflowing from the depths of his body. Perhaps of that, it was growing more difficult to control his power. If he tried to use magic, it would run out of control, and if he flowed mana into his sword, he could no longer maintain the mana in the sword's shape.

Hesitating at his rapid growth, Rudel carried out the training required to control it. When he practiced swinging his sword, the sound it made was clearly different from the other students around. His movements as well, while the individual himself wasn't satisfied with them, from the eyes of those around, his feats already looked superhuman. And to Rudel, everyone around exercised some tact, and no one would normally call over to him.

But on that day there was an individual to call out. His friend Luecke. Luecke generally carried his research late into the night, so his mornings never started too early. Yet now he wore mobile clothing with a wooden sword in his hand.

"You sure are energetic in the morning, Rudel."

"Luecke, how rare. You didn't do research yesterday?"

Rudel stopped swinging his sword and looked at Luecke. Wiping away his sweat, he tried to have a little chat. Ever since Vargas Graduated, there were few students who would ever talk to Rudel in his training, so Rudel was delighted to hear Luecke out.

"Can you lock blades with me for a bit? The way things are going, my grades are going to end up the same as Eunius', and that's something I can't bear."

Holding up his wood sword, Luecke took a stance for a sword style focused

around thrusts. Without thinking anything in particular, Rudel took a stance as well. But in this circumstance, Luecke was the one receiving instruction. If there were any students capable of decently exchanging blows with Rudel, it would have to be Eunius or the upperclassmen.

“You’re not stepping in far enough. And there’s excess in your movements.”

Parrying and repelling Luecke’s thrust, Rudel pointed out his points of issue. Luecke tried to stress on and correct them, but as he focused too much on them, his balance crumbled. Rudel went right into lowering his own wooden sword, stopping it just short of his neck.

“Hah, I guess it’s too early for me to practice with you... sorry for taking your time.”

“It’s fine. Rather, is your research going alright?”

“It’s going just fine. But I don’t want to have things end as a loss, right? If I graduate with nothing but a loss against you and Eunius, I’m sure I’ll regret it. In that case, I have to do my best now.”

As the two shed sweat, they wiped their brows and sat right over the lawn. Looking up at the sky, it was high today once more.

“More importantly, how’s Aleist doing? The first semester’s almost over, but is he still being pummeled around?”

“I wonder... last I saw of him, the tiger tribe men were taking turns having match after match with him. They were quite surprised with Aleist’s stamina. Delightfully surprised, and they said the way things were going, he’d pick up their techniques in no time.”

Luecke felt some pity for Aleist as he turned talks to the ceremony at the palace he had been unable to undergo the year before.

“That’s a pity. But that aside, the knight appointment ceremony at the royal palace is this week. We were under house arrest so we couldn’t attend last year, so we’ve got to get through with it this time.”

It was an important ceremony where they would swear their loyalty to the country as knights. As they were receiving disciplinary action the year before,

the three of them were unable to take it. Similarly, Izumi would be taking part this year as well.

“Ah, so it’s been a year since then. It really does fly by...”

“Given our status, the king will personally be appointing us as knights. As the heads of the Three Lords are all gathering together this time, it seems the palace is in a festive mood.”

As Rudel and the others were being appointed, the heads of the Three Lord Houses were dropping by the palace. Hearing that, Rudel informed Luecke he hadn’t been told anything about it. Even when Rudel had been recognized by the king, Luecke gave a bitter smile at the Arses House’s treatment of him.

Another reason for the palace’s revelry was that this would be Rudel’s debut in high society. The nobles showed some interest in finally seeing the individual who had received various forms of assessments. Luecke and Eunius’ fathers were no exceptions.

“The bell’s about to chime six. Shall we go to the dining hall, Rudel?”

“Yeah, Eunius might be awake too. He was making a ruckus over how starting yesterday, he had a class he couldn’t be late to.”

“He really is no good.”

The two of them laughed as they made for the dining hall. By the time they arrived, a sleepy Eunius, and a similarly sleepy former goddess were restlessly eating breakfast.



Meanwhile, in the empire, Askewell and Mies were confirming the results of their experiment in the research facility on imperial soil. Inside a large cage, an ogre of black body and white markings was obediently taking a seat. It was only the prototype, but its performance was more than enough to satisfy Askewell.

“I received a report that it defeated one of its own ogre brethren under our orders, but I never thought it would develop to such an extent.”

As Askewell seemed satisfied with the test subject, Mies killed her feelings and gave her thanks. But her mind was in chaos all the way. While Mies had

been carrying out the experiments from before she met Askewell, she never thought she would be able to achieve such results. It felt almost as if all of it was contrived to work in her favor.

“Your words are wasted on me, general.”

“You’re quite the stiff one, Mies. But after reading a report on the experiment’s results, I just got an urge to see the real thing. Even if I look like this, I used to be the scholarly type, see. I once intended to discard the sword I inherited and take up the scholar’s path.”

Hearing that unexpected tidbit, Mies was a little surprised. It was the moment she learned an unexpected side of the young imperial prince Askewell. Seeing the prince’s face turn to a childish smile, Mies felt a little happy.

“You, general? Now that’s a surprise. What sort of research were you doing?”

“Yeah, it was mostly on agriculture... hey, Mies. When the empire and the kingdom exist on the same continent, why must they be so different?”

On Askewell’s question, Mies thought over what she should answer. She could tell he wasn’t talking about a difference of custom, culture or language, but she didn’t know what he was getting at.

“... Compared to the kingdom’s abundance, the people of the empire have barely any to eat. I, you see, I set out to be a scholar to save the empire’s people. But an experiment that’s success I was certain of failed, and no matter how many theses I wrote, no one would ever look my way anymore. I was heartbroken, but even so, as a prince of the empire, I chose to work for the sake of its people.”

“The land of the kingdom truly is plentiful. That’s precisely why the empire needs to obtain fertile land even if it means going to war, but... so there was such a time for you, general.”

Askewell hung his head, and as he raised it, his previous childish smile changed to a haunted one.

“It’s laughable, really. No matter how hard I tried to save lives, I was just running in circles, but the moment I became a military man, the achievements just kept piling up. It’s as if I was never cut out to be a scholar from the start. I

get the feeling god is telling me that war was always the only option.”

“General...”

Mies was coming to understand the individual called Askewell just a little bit more. But as Askewell’s smile returned to its normal state, he spoke to Mies once more.

“I don’t need the sympathy, and I haven’t lost my objective of being useful to the people. The more land we obtain from the kingdom, the more of the empire’s people we can save... and I’ll be delighted if you could lend me your power at the time.”

“Yes!”

Seeing Askewell’s back as he walked from the facility, the anxieties Mies had to that point were blown away. Feeling as if all would be well as long as she followed him, Mies didn’t feel the slightest sense of unease.

For Askewell was the third prince of the empire, and the Hero Aleist couldn’t become.



Paying a visit to the palace, Rudel and the other students were split between nobles higher than Count Rank and those below for their investiture. As last year’s class was noble-concentrated, there were fewer participants than average this year, but with the Three Lords’ eldest sons taking part, the palace was rowdy.

“How stiff. Hey Rudel, wanna ditch?”

“I cannot do that! If I don’t become a knight, I cannot become a dragoon.”

Hating these sorts of formalities, Eunius invited Rudel to run off. But just as he expected, Rudel declined. The exchange was watched over restlessly by their underclassmen, the third years.

Luecke was calm, sitting at ease in the meeting room that had become their waiting room. But in that meeting room was a nervous Izumi. Thinking Izumi was worried about something, Rudel called over. But the cause of Izumi’s anxiety was Rudel.

“Are you nervous, Izumi? It’s alright, the ceremonies go the same way for both groups.”

“... Rudel, why am I here?”

“That’s easy. When I tried asking, they gave permission.”

“Why did they give permission for me?”

“That’s also easy. When the officials were hesitating over it, Eunius and Luecke came at just the right time and helped out.”

“... You two...”

As Izumi directed her face to Luecke and Eunius, the two of them averted their eyes. But both their shoulders were shaking ever-so-slightly. They had taken such action for the kicks, but they had never imagined it would actually be permitted. But as the Three Lords’ eldest sons requested it, the king also acknowledged Izumi’s participation.

“Don’t worry, Izumi. It used to be that the king personally did all of them. We only use this system because the numbers were so great that there was no helping it.”

Izumi wanted to hold her head. She understood what Rudel was saying, but even so, there was something called atmosphere. It’s not like everyone would hold a favorable impression of her, a foreigner in Courtois land. As Izumi hated stepping out of line, this ceremony was starting to feel like the trial of her life.

“There’s nothing for you to worry about. If you’re aiming to be a high knight, then that investiture will be a much grander one than this. You should get used to it while you can.”

Luecke explained to console her, and as Izumi was weak when it came to that, she resolved herself. Just at the moment she set her resolve, officials of the palace informed those in the meeting room the preparations were in order.

In the hall, starting with the royal line, the ministers and the high ranking officials, officers, the high nobles and young knights watched over them. The students walked along the carpet spread over the hall, kneeling before the king all at once. This was where the royal orchestra was to show their mettle, and

they put their all into their performance.

(So I've finally come all the way here...)

The king saw Rudel kneeling and gave a bitter smile as he recalled his meeting with the three in the infirmary. After two years, those three were finally becoming knights; looking at those around, the king turned his expression serious.

The ceremony went on as planned, and while the Diade and Halbades House heads' expressions were serious as they watched on their sons, they were rejoicing within. The nobles around each held a high assessment as they saw the Rudel of rumors. The way he carried himself was perfect. Even he wouldn't do anything outrageous during a ceremony, so the eyes of the nobles as they watched Rudel were serious indeed.

But the Arses House, Rudel's father alone held conflicted emotions. The honor he lost in Chlust's mishap had been regained by Rudel. But even so, he had grown to hold an emotion close to hatred towards him. He learned jealousy at this situation so different from when he was to step up.

Each individual was called individually by the king, and each would express words of loyalty in return. Once they became knights, they would earn status from the country, but the knight's status was accompanied by an obligation. If a war broke out, they were not permitted to flee. They swore to fight for the country's sake.

Ane like that, the hero prince Askewell and Rudel plunge forward towards their fated battle. The preparations were gradually underway for the war in a few years time.

Chapter 61: The Little Sister and the Magic Idiot

On the extended break of his fourth year, Rudel returned to his house for the first in quite some time. He hadn't been able to hold a conversation with his father at the appointment ceremony. Seeing Luecke and Eunius talk happily with their house heads, their fathers, he wanted to say thanks to his own father who had raised him to this point.

During his third year, he had devoted all his time to Chlust and had been unable to return, so he was also growing worried for his little sister Lena. Stepping down from the carriage and seeing his home for the first in a while, Rudel was surprised at the reception he received.

"What's this?"

Was the first line he said. The mansion's servants were all lined up to meet and greet him. Seeing the servants lined all the way from the gate to the entranceway, could a guest be coming? Rudel thought as he headed for the back door. But the soldiers at the gate hurriedly stopped him.

"Young master, please enter the mansion from the front door."

"Young master? Isn't a guest coming?"

"T-that isn't the case, We were told to prepare a greeting worthy of the next head..."

While the gatekeeper didn't even try to look him in the eye, Rudel thought a bit. Once he had finished thinking, he walked down the path-servants lined on both sides-to enter the mansion. Once he entered the manor, he was greeted by a butler. On this reception he had never received before, Rudel was troubled how to react as he spoke to that butler.

"You don't need to do this next time onwards. Just do things as you always have."

"But that's...! no, I'll let them know."

The butler who tried to say something before giving up led Rudel to his father, the house head's room. Even if you called it his father's room, it wasn't a room

to do work or a study. It was the bedroom his mistresses stayed. The butler knocked the door, and after he informed the head that Rudel had arrived, a sleepy voice came from within.

‘... Enter.’

The butler took a position outside, and Rudel alone entered the room. It was normally a room he would never enter, but as Rudel stepped in, he narrowed his eyes.

“Father, I have just returned from the academy for the extended break.”

“I see, do whatever.”

Seeing his father unmotivatedly bury his face into his mistress’ bosom, Rudel mulled over whether to say what was on his mind. He got the feeling the location was way too bad. Filled with the stench of alcohol, numerous expensive dresses and gemstones were carelessly left all over the room. Taking a single bow, Rudel left and headed straight for his own room.



“The mansion really has been strange as of late. How should I put it? ... When I thought they were in a panic, their attitude suddenly changed.”

Once he arrived at his own room, his little sister Lena who had heard of his return was already there. Rudel wasn’t surprised at that, but he was shocked by Lena’s growth. Her stature was high for a twelve-year-old, her hair grown out and bundled up on the left of her head. He still had vestiges of what he knew, but he had to say she had grown too big.

As the atmosphere of the manor had changed, he tried asking her, but Lena could only say the change was a sudden one. It was a response fitting of Lena, who never paid much attention to her surroundings, but Rudel couldn’t comprehend the situation he was in. To that point, there were plenty of servants who wouldn’t even acknowledge him when he returned home.

And yet, today everyone’s attitude had changed. It was much too creepy, thought Rudel.

“More importantly, is the academy fun? You didn’t come back last year, and

when my big brother isn't here with me, I... I... ah, did you bring back anything nice?"

"I got some cake at the dining hall."

When she handed the cake over, Lena happily began eating it on the spot. She had grown taller and more mature, but seeing she hadn't changed too much inside, Rudel smiled.

"Even so, I can't feel at ease here. Just what could have happened? I'm sure it's related to Chlust being sent off to the border, but when they take such a blatant attitude, you know."

"This is what Erselica told me, but now that Chlust is gone, you're all they have left so they have to treat you good. When it was decided Chlust was off to the outskirts, Erselica was crying you know."

Hearing the name of his other little sister, Rudel recalled Erselica who had clung onto Chlust since she was small. And as he did, this time Lena spoke as if recalling something.

"Oh, right! Erselica's going to attend the academy once she turns fifteen, and get this! I'm going to be going with her! As a guard, or rather, the head said to look out and make sure no flies swarm around her. Erselica's going to marry into money, so the wife told me to make sure no poor people get near her at the academy..."

Around the last part Lena lost her high spirits, but hearing that, Rudel was convinced this territory had been driven into quite some financial straits. While they were still fine for now, Erselica who they had doted on so was to be married with money as the only criteria. Meaning status and character were inconsequential.

Recalling his own mother, Rudel grew sad as he wondered if that way of thought was correct.

"More importantly, bro! Have a match with me. I've raised my skills even higher in this past year, so perhaps I've even surpassed you."

"That so, then I'd better take you on with all I've got."

Rudel and Lena jumped out of the window. It was something they had done since they were kids, and an action they took without feeling anything was off. Holding up wooden sword and spear in the yard, the two of them contested until evening set in.



“You want to see the academy? You’re still only twelve. Wait three years and you’ll go whether you want to or not, right?”

While they were in the middle of break, Lena suddenly began holding interest in the academy as she incessantly pestered Rudel about it. As it was his sister’s request, he would happily talk about his life at the academy. But that was a school life with Rudel at its base.

To put it lightly, it was a mistaken school life.

“It’s a place where you destroy strong walls with magic and have life-or-death matches with your classmates, right? I want to go check it out now!”

There were around two weeks left of break, but Rudel thought. Maybe that wasn’t a bad idea, he decided. When he confirmed it with the butler, his father’s reply came back as ‘do what you want’. Until that point, he wouldn’t even answer if Rudel said such a thing.

It really made him feel uncomfortable, so he wanted to go to the academy. At the academy, there was Izumi and the former goddess so he wouldn’t be bored. And if he brought Lena there, then she would probably be happy. He decided with such light sentiment.



“Whoooaah!! So this is the school cafeteria.”

Rudel returned to the academy from his house’s manor. When he came back with a week of break remaining, besides Izumi, Luecke and Eunius had returned as well. Coming to the academy and first heading towards the boy’s dorm, Rudel ran into Luecke at the boy’s dorm dining hall.

“This is the boy’s dorm’s dining hall. The school cafeteria’s in the school building, so I’ll take you there later.”

“Rudel? You’re back quite early... who’s that you’ve got there?”

As Luecke grew curious of the individual besides Rudel, that Individual-Lena-smiled and gave her greeting. The clothes she wore were hand-me-downs from Rudel, so she was a belle in men’s clothing.

“Pleasure to meet you! I’m my big brother’s little sister, Lena.”

“I-I see.”

Luecke looked at Lena and ended up thinking of her as a female version of Eunius. In that case, he had no idea what to say, so he turned the conversation back to Rudel.

“Even if you wanted to take your sister here, isn’t it a bit early for that? You couldn’t wait until next year?”

Seeing Lena, given her height, Luecke thought she would be coming to the academy in a year or so. After Rudel explained about his little sister Lena, Luecke was surprised.

“Twelve!? You’re a big one for twelve... no, my apologies.”

“Don’t worry about it, more importantly, is there a person called Eunius around these parts?”

“Are you Eunius’ acquaintance? You have some business with him!”

Then and there, Lena pulled out the spear she kept over her back. She spoke with true delight.

“My broster said he’s strong so I wanted to try fighting him!”

“You’d better give it a rest, Lena. It’s a bit too early for you.”

After Rudel calmed Lena down, Luecke was starting to see her as a Eunius-like woman. A young girl as if Eunius and Rudel were added together and averaged out. That was Luecke’s impression of her. While Luecke would often quarrel with Eunius on a regular basis, when he saw a similar point in Lena, he thought.

(O-oh god, why is my heart racing!? No, it couldn’t be, something like that’s...)

One look at Lena had Luecke feel emotions he had never experienced before. And without him being able to hold a proper conversation with the girl, she and

Rudel headed off to the girls' dormitory.



The reason he headed for the girls' dorm was to retrieve the former goddess he had left in Izumi's care. During the break, he had handed Izumi the money he thought her food expenditure and various other expenses would take and asked her to look after her. Rudel could practically enter the girls' dorm without question. Rudel thought that was normal and paid it no mind.

"What sort of person is Izumi? Your girlfriend?"

"... No. She's a precious friend."

"Eeh, but you're always so happy when you talk about her, right? Why are you lying to me?"

Lena was interested in Izumi, who Rudel would talk about at the mansion. Being able to finally meet her, Lena was excited within. And yet she felt dissatisfaction at Rudel's statement that concealed his true feelings.

As they were talking, Izumi and the former goddess were eating in the girls' dorm dining hall. As the former goddess scarfed down a mountain of cake, Izumi gave a bitter smile as she sipped her tea and watched.

"... Hmmhohmm."

"Hey, you're not supposed to talk with food in your mouth, right? Welcome back, Rudel... and the one beside you is?"

"Ooooooh! It's Izumi in the flesh! I've found myself a real live Izumi!"

Izumi was somewhat surprised, being referred to as such, but seeing the color of Lena's hair, she wondered for just a moment if she had come from the orient.

"This is my little sister Lena. She said she was interested in the academy, so I brought her over."

Rudel carried out the second introduction, but the Lena in question was lifting the former goddess up like a child and looking at her with wonder. It looked almost as if an adult was doing an upsy daisy! To a child.

“This is a former goddess? I was kinda imagining something more impressive. What a letdown.”

“H-hey you! What do you think you’re saying!? Even if you add a former, I’m still a goddess! And yet what do you have to be disappointed with!?”

Seeing Lena’s dejected face, the former goddess raged on with cream sticking to her mouth. But having lost interest, Lena remembered it was right about noon. And this was the girls’ dorm dining hall... she looked at Rudel with pleading eyes.

“Yeah, you can order whatever you want.”

“As expected of my brother! Then a large serving of the special, and a large serving of that one ala carte, and should I eat this one too? Last is dessert, but... well, whatever.”

“Hold it right there! When they have such delicious desserts, you order them not, instead ordering a large portion of everything on the daily menu? And you call yourself a woman?”

Having finished her cake, the former goddess looked at Lena who showed no interest in dessert as if she was looking at an endangered species. Ignoring all that, Lena received her heaping portions from the lunch lady, took her seat and started eating with good momentum. It could only be called the grandest of gobbling techniques.

“She ignored me! Rudel, that woman just ignored me!”

“I’m sorry, I’ll put a word in later. That aside, you... haven’t been causing Izumi any trouble, have you?”

Rudel turned his eyes from the frozen former goddess to Izumi. Izumi gave a slight smile as she explained it was alright. And the former goddess worshiped her for it.



Adding on Izumi and the former goddess from the girls’ dorm, the four of them walked off together. And just as they did, came the form of Aleist running away from the tiger tribe. Having resigned himself to training over the long

vacation, Aleist leapt at Rudel as soon as he spotted him. Grabbing Rudel by the lapels, Aleist wept as he spoke.

“R-Rudel... what have you done!!!?”

“Hmm? What’s up, Aleist?”

“Don’t what’s up me! Worked to the bone by those scary faces every day! I thought time and again I was really going to die, you hear! Those guys are way too serious, and I can’t keep up with their flow and... geh!”

Noticing something, Aleist swiftly ran off, and this time a few tiger tribe men came running in pursuit of Aleist. As they passed by Rudel’s group, they lowered their heads to Izumi.

Seeing Izumi’s bitter smile, Lena spoke.

“Izumi-san’s an amazing person. To have those scary people lowering their heads... is she actually scary?”

“N-no! That’s, well... I only permitted it because Rudel said he needed it no matter what for Aleist’s sake. I never thought it would ever come to this.”

Izumi tried to resolve Lena’s misunderstanding, but as a matter of fact, she had become an existence the demi-humans couldn’t ignore. Both nobles and commoners kept an eye on her. The reasons being she could speak normally with those related to the Three Lords, and she was the one in control of Rudel’s petting. Oblivious to her true importance, Izumi didn’t have a grasp on the surrounding situation.



Once Lena went back off to the house, Eunius just missed her as he met up with Rudel’s group. Having spotted Luecke, Eunius had heard about Lena and gone searching for Rudel.

“What’s this, so Rudel’s little sister already went back?”

“It’s your fault for playing around. Well, she was a good girl.”

At that moment, he recalled the talks that came up when he had returned to the house. In exchange for a loan, the Arses House put forth talks of an engagement between Erselica and Eunius. Eunius’ father and the surrounding

nobles were against it, so the discussions were washed away.

“Come to think of it, Rudel, there were some talks about an engagement between me and your sister.”

“Say what!? Then what am I to call you henceforth? Since we’ll be relatives, brother-in-law? Or brother of mine?”

Rudel reacted seriously to Eunius’ joke. Usually, that would be fine, but hearing that story, Luecke came under a misunderstanding.

“A-an engagement to Rudel’s sister (Lena) you say!?”

“Hmm? That’s right, there were some talks about an engagement to her (Erselica).”

Hearing that talk, what sister did he mean? Rudel thought. But Luecke was sure it was the little sister Lena. While he knew of Erselica’s existence, Eunius’ sudden statement and the impression of Lena whom he’d just met had remained in his mind.

“What’s up with you?”

Eunius asked as Luecke hung his head. And raising his face, Luecke made a proclamation. Everyone present was surprised at the words they’d never usually hear from him.

“It’s on... Eunius, I challenge you to a duel!”

Chapter 62: The Four Idiots and Fluff Disorder

Luecke's duel uproar soon reached the ears of the academy's headmaster. There was no way the academy could permit a duel between legitimate children of the Three Lords' Houses, and they were pressed for how to respond. The problem didn't just lay with Luecke, but also in that Eunius had consented to the dual. And while they had tried to duke it out on the spot, Rudel had brought a stop to it.

But the reason he stopped it wasn't because fighting was bad. He proposed they choose an appropriate spot for their match. As Rudel had simply added fuel to the fire, those concerned cursed him as they thought up a plan.

They thought and mulled... and took up the idea the headmaster had wrung out.



"The individual matches of the second term? Sure enough, I have no objections with the time and place. It seems Eunius was going to participate from the start, and even if Luecke turns in an application now, I'm sure he'll make it in time. Since the academy proposed it, he'll probably be able to even if he doesn't make it."

Hearing the notification from the academy, Rudel's reaction was level. It wasn't as if he didn't think anything of a duel between friends. But once was enough, Rudel thought it was necessary for the two of them to seriously clash.

"Isn't that terrible? As a friend, that's a terrible response, Rudel?"

"Why is that? From the point of view of you goddesses, shouldn't this be a delightful development?"

Hearing that, the former goddess thought. Two who usually didn't get along would duel and become honest with their feelings...

"It's the best! I mean no, you're the worst! If you're their friend, you should at least mediate their fights."

She gave a wide grin as she rebuked Rudel. Rudel handed her a cake to shut

her up for a bit, and spent a while in thought. The two of them didn't get along well, but they did share some common worries, and it wouldn't be strange if they got along in the academy. Or so he thought. And in truth, Rudel got along with both of them.

Even if their houses were at odds, there was something called a sense of distance. If they hated each other, they could just stay away, but the two of them stayed within an arm's length. Rudel found it a mystery.

"I'm sure the two of them are actually friends."

"... ? I think they really don't get along, you know? They're just getting along because you're there, or because it's interesting to be around you, right?"

Hearing the words of the former goddess who'd finished her cake, Rudel wondered if that was the case. But he decided this duel would be the perfect place for them to spit up the dissatisfactions they had been building up towards one another. And before he could think about anyone else, he wanted to prioritize polishing his control of his power.



Luecke swung his sword alone in the boys' dorm courtyard. When it came to battle, he was more often than not charged with magic on the back lines, so he needed to polish the close combat skills he knew he was lacking. Vexing as it was, Luecke was well aware he couldn't beat Eunius when it came to close combat.

"Just how far can I go in the short time remaining... no, what good is whining? This battle alone is one I can't lose. And there's no way I can lose to that guy (Eunius)!"

Luecke had learned a sword style focused on thrusts, but he had even less talent than Rudel. The experience he'd built up didn't even reach Eunius' or Rudel's feet.

That's how he was, but it wasn't as if he didn't have a chance. Magic... he was more skilled in it than anyone, and his talent and the experience and knowledge he'd built up trumped the both of them. Even with that magic, he had been unable to stand against Rudel in the past, so he was unable to be conceited in it.

He had a trump card, but wanting another hand to play, Luecke polished his swordplay.



In contrast, Eunius also took up a surprising action. He dropped by the magic proving grounds he would never usually approach. As he usually fought centered around the sword more than magic, Eunius had neglected the thing called magic.

You could say that was simply how high his talent in the sword was, but he understood that alone wasn't enough to win.

Their battles with Rudel had changed Luecke and Eunius. He was still polishing his sword, but surely Luecke would expect that and draft up countermeasures. Thought Eunius. So he decided to hastily acquire some magic.

"Tsk, that thickhead... but well, this is a good opportunity. It isn't a bad thing to have a serious fight."

Eunius spoke with a ferocious smile. What he wanted was a magic he could use in real combat. He knew a number of the magics taught at the academy, but if he couldn't use them in battle, they were pointless. That on his mind, Eunius recalled the magic he had taken from Rudel.

Touching his hands to his chest, Rudel had used a violent method of smacking magic in at point blank.

"I could just ask Rudel, but this is something I should resolve on my own. I don't want to lose against that guy (Luecke), after all."

Eunius stood in front of the wall erected to fire magic at, and from memory, he tried imitating Rudel. Even if it was an imitation, he didn't touch his palm against the wall. Cladding his fist in magic, he slammed it in.

The impact hurt his fist, but a crack spread across the wall.

"That hurt like hell! If I keep at it like this, my fist will break... do I put in more magic? Unlike the sword, it seems easier to control, but the timing is harder."

Eunius thought back to when Rudel had used it. This time he put in more than double the mana and smacked the wall.

“This is going to take some time...”

Eunius looked at the blown-away wall as he muttered. He had got the timing off, but the wall had been obliterated. Normally, this wouldn't be a problem, but his opponent was Luecke. When it came to magic, Eunius recognized he was much greater than he, and he couldn't be satisfied with these results.



“I-I’m doooooonnee!!!”

Aleist’s job change to black knight held martial arts as one of its prerequisites, and while it was hard to say it ended safely, he had succeeded. Training in the arts over the course of a few months, Aleist had definitely grown. As proof of his black knight status, he could now control the darkness from his shadow. He shed tears of passion.

But to the men of the tiger tribe, such a thing was irrelevant. More than that, hating doing things half-assed, they took Aleist’s completed martial arts with a grain of excitement.

“Of course there’s more to come, you fool! Today, we’re starting from the basics again.”

“So you’ve come that far... finally, our dearest wishes shall too.”

“For our big brothers who’ve already graduated, we’ll learn for their share as well!”

“Eh? No. We can just end it here, so I’ll report to Rudel and...”

“”Shut it and get back to work!!!”

“H-how unreasonabbbblee!!!”

Aleist’s troubles continued...



At the time Aleist cried out, Rudel was practicing unity of body and mind. At the rapid growth of his physical abilities and magic, it had become quite frequent that they would go out of his control. When he tried firing magic, it wasn't only once or twice that he was blown away himself. The output was too different, and what he had to do was close to relearning control from the

ground up.

And for Rudel, the greatest reason he practiced his meditation was Lena's words. When he had been making sure not to be conscious or Izumi, Lena's words had caused him to waver.

Recalling them again, Rudel stopped his mental concentration and stood. When his sister had uncovered his lie, he had no choice but to admit it was so. He didn't put it to words, but Rudel had definitely lied when it came to Izumi. And even if it came out in his actions, he had intended to conceal his feelings.

This time he tried to swing his wood sword. But even if he swung it, it hadn't a fragment of its usual cutting edge.

"If I'm like this, then I don't have the time to worry about those two."

Rudel looked up as he muttered.



"Aleist-dono is training with the tiger tribe boys?"

"So it seems. It appears he was at the academy over break, training his martial arts."

The long break over, Fina returned to the academy. Her guard captain Sophina had arrived beforehand to prepare for her arrival. Because of that, she had caught wind of some of the academy's rumors to tell her.

In Fina's cleanly-kept room at the academy, Fina sat on the sofa as she sipped some black tea. The individual was delighted at being released from her stiff life at the palace, but... Sophina's report caused her insides to turn with rage.

"It looks like he has it hard."

(T-that damn homo! You mean to say he's been fluffing around with all the tiger tribe men when I was away!? Even I've been forced into a no fluff life at the palace, but that Aleist... I'll put a curse on him!)

"Yes, he's had his fair share of troubles. Also, Luecke-dono of the Halbades house will be participating in this year's individual tournaments. It seems he raised a bit of an uproar, challenging Eunius-dono to a duel."

"Oh my."

(Like I care! Delaying to give a report on master, and saying nothing but such inconsequential information... that's why your last marriage interview was a failure.)

"Yes, and about Rudel-sa... Dono! Apparently he brought his sister over. He showed her around the academy, and I heard a report that she was quite an interesting child."

"Sister? Could you be talking about Erselica-san?"
(I think there was such a girl. Though I don't really remember her.)

While Fina thought such terrible things within, her expressionless face and level-headed responses made sure her opponent would never notice. But Sophina's report brought a sudden change to that.

"No, it seems she is the daughter of Archduke Arses' mistress. A girl of rare black hair, I heard she got along considerably well with Rudel."

"W-what was that... black hair? I see, so the reason he likes black hair is his sister..."

"P-princess?"

"To think my master was a man of such high-level preferences. That's why he kept 'that woman' by his side to fill in the gaps."

(Hmm, so I've finally uncovered the reason he likes black hair. To summarize, it's the little sister factor! And once I get my hands on it, my era shall come! The times are a changeggg!!!)

Leaving nervous Sophina to the side, Fina decided her future objectives. The little sister factor, or rather, she was to approach Rudel while drawing attention to the fact she was a little sister. Thinking over that plan, she thought over what she would require first. Cuteness? Expressionless, so out of the question. Sweetness? Expressionless so out of the question. Be cold and then kind... she didn't know if Rudel would be able to comprehend her intent, so out of the question.

"Princess, won't you give up on Rudel-dono already? Even if it may be the request of a princess, Rudel-dono has the circumstances of the Arses House to deal with, so... are you listening to me, princess?"

(She's definitely thinking something different under that expressionless face... hah, can't someone take over this job from me? My marriage interview failed, and everyone's looking at me with warm eyes now.)

"Right. First, I'd like to meet with my flu... Mii, Sophina."

(Dangit, master is surprisingly hard to conquer. In that case, I guess I should relax and get some fluffing as I think long and hard over it. My fluff bars are running low, so Mii ain't sleeping tonight!)

"Princess, Mii will not return until tomorrow."



The characters who would become the protagonist's comrades based on the route he chose. Those were Luecke and Eunius. Luecke who boasted powerful magic, and Eunius who specialized in close combat, the story advanced by choosing between them. While they were both reliable allies in the latter half of the game, by no means could you obtain both of them.

It was a problem that came when the commoner protagonist committed an act of discourtesy against a noble. The Halbades House or the Diade House, he would need to have one of them back him. And by that flow, and the fact they were each at the top of a faction, he would lose the chance to get to know the other.

They held a position in society to protect the protagonist who would become a hero. Once the game entered its war arc, a factional dispute would break out causing the Courtois Kingdom to be late to react, and from then on, they held a role of saving the protagonist.

The one who caused the factional dispute was the one who wasn't chosen. The chosen one fought alongside the protagonist as justice. But that meant the one not chosen would have to be evil.

If they weren't chosen, they would become an enemy. That was the pair of Luecke and Eunius. And the fates of the two were beginning to move at the climax of the midgame.

Chapter 63: The Sword Idiot and the Magic Idiot

When it came to the biggest event of the second term, for the fundamental curriculum, it would have to be the wilderness training. For the upperclassmen, the individual entry tournament. The individuals' tournament was an event held while the fundamental curriculum students were gone. And this time's tournament held even more excitement than the norm.

Last year's champion Eunius, and the runner-up Aleist. Alongside the first-time challenger Luecke, and the greatest problem child since the academy's founding Rudel; a lineup to fire up the academy's spirits.

Unlike the students who expected to see a match of fates, the teachers could only pray the Three Lords' eldest sons didn't get injured. Last time, and the time before, their stomachs had gone into spasms seeing Rudel and the others run ragged. But elsewhere from the teachers' hopes, Rudel and the others were putting in their all.

"We're all over the place. If we ever go against one another, it'll have to be in the semi-finals."

Rudel looked at the posted individuals' tournament bracket as he muttered. Listening in to his side, Luecke was also convinced he would fight Eunius in the semi-finals.

"I wanted to get it over with quick, but the semi-finals are fair enough. Looks like it's your fated battle with Aleist as well. We might be going at one another in the finals."

While Luecke thought he was going to win, Aleist called over. He had come with Eunius to see the tournament bracket.

"Um, I also intend to win, but..."

"You've got no need to worry about who you'll go up against in the finals."

Cutting off Aleist's statement partway, Eunius intimidated Luecke. On that atmosphere, the other students who were similarly confirming the brackets distanced themselves. A prickly tense air ruled the area, but from Lena's words,

Rudel's concentration was much lower than the other three.

"How interesting for you to come and provoke me. Because you can't win, you plan to play your wits? All I hear are the howlings of a sore loser."

Luecke feigned level-headedness, but his feelings towards Lena and Eunius were becoming complicated things. From a want to win, to hatred... and he was beginning to think of them as simply natural feelings.

"You make me laugh. Meanwhile, you've got no mind to use your wits or to give it your all. I'll be facing Rudel in the finals, so you look just right for preserving my stamina."

Giving a grin, Eunius continued intimidating Luecke. On those words, Aleist grew mildly irritated. He had been training too. Undergoing a grueling training regiment, he looked at Rudel with confidence. If he defeated Rudel, everyone would recognize him... he thought.

The Rudel in question was more worried about his feelings for Izumi than the other three. He was thinking too hard on it, and at this point, he was avoiding her so much it seemed unnatural.

"... So the tournament's already here."

He had no hesitation in becoming a dragoon, but when Izumi was brought out, his heart would waver. For Rudel alone, his feelings were going in a different direction.



"The individuals' tournament... how interesting."

(I don't really care. I care about it as much as that fluffless palace.)

Fina was looking at the tournament bracket she had been handed by Sophina. From Sophina's point of view, she had some interest in seeing how strong a student could become. What's more, the four who were participating were definitely strong.

"I think Rudel, who didn't participate last time, will win. What do you think, princess?"

Handing the paper back to Sophina, Fina spoke.

“I think so too, but Euni-dono has more experience so he might have the advantage.”

(So master's your one and only? Just how thirsty are you for his petting, woman?)

Some time had gone by since the second semester began and Fina had gradually transitioned from her life in the palace to the sort of fluffy lifestyle she preferred, spending her time in fulfillment. Even if she mulled over how to conquer Rudel, she didn't care about much else. But there a single something came to mind.

“Well no matter who wins, we should give him praise, Sophina.”

(This is my chance! Even if master loses here, he won't be forced to leave the academy. In that case, if master loses and I wrap him in these transient breasts of mine... even if I can't conquer him, I'll grasp at the opportunity!)

“I-is that so, princess?”

(Huh? The princess is thinking something strange under that poker face again... I'll just ignore it.)

“I'm looking forward to it.”

(That black hair and that traitorous junior disciple better prepare themselves! I'll lift master's petting ban in no time.)

As Fina polished her schemes, she spent that day faithful to her desires.



In the girls' dorm, the former goddess and Izumi looked at the tournament bracket. As Rudel had been unnaturally avoiding Izumi lately, the former goddess had been hanging around her more. Rudel knew that, and at this point, he could give the former goddess her own money to pay for her own expenses.

“So Rudel and Aleist will hit in the semi-finals.”

“Ah, you mean that trainee? If only he was still a trainee, I'd be able to laugh. But if he loses to Rudel, I'll still be able to laugh.”

After giving the former goddess a smile, Izumi looked out the window and breathed a sigh. She knew Rudel was avoiding her. But Izumi wouldn't press him on in. Both sides were aware of the reasons, They understood, but those

around couldn't leave them be.

"... If Rudel loses I'm going to laugh too, Izumi."

"Yeah, you're right."

Seeing Izumi's unmotivated response, the former goddess sensed she was the same as Rudel. The former goddess who had no interest in status or fame, up until recently she was fuzzy on nobility itself. There was the king, then the nobles and finally the commoners... that was the ranking in her head.

If she complained to Rudel she was ignored, and no matter what she said to Izumi, she would only get a sad smile.

"Izumi, if you don't properly tell him your feelings, they'll never get across. I mean, it's Rudel we're talking about here. That man who can't read the mood, there's no way he could understand your feelings."

"That's... but we both have our positions. Me and Rudel can't become anything more than friends."

"You humans sure are a pain! You could all live just fine without some status or title."

Even if the former goddess was the one to say it, she lacked any fragment of persuasive power. In essence, the former goddess was being protected by Rudel's status as a noble, and only by it was she able to live in the academy.

"But just living isn't enough for Rudel. If Rudel doesn't keep looking up, then even if he lives, it'll be the same as death... he's enduring various things for that."

Izumi spoke as if saying it to herself, and the former goddess made a face as if she couldn't understand a word of that. Life the same as death. It meant if Rudel gave up on becoming a dragoon, he wouldn't be Rudel anymore.

"Izumi... I don't get what you're trying to say."



On the day of the tournament, Rudel and the others could see the spectators flooding the arena's seats from the waiting room window. Once the opening ceremony ended, they were sent right to the waiting room. Some moved their

bodies, and others called their hearts. And even within that waiting room, all manner of eyes were gathering on the four.

As Aleist looked at Rudel, he saw he was acting differently from usual. At first, he thought Rudel was nervous too, but then he recalled he wasn't that sort of person.

As he looked on, Eunius who was watching the match called out.

"Whooh, they're all giving it their all. Aleist, your turn's coming up."

"Eh? Oh, yeah."

"What's with that, where'd your spirit go? Well you're better off than the guy who can only do magic."

"..."

In the waiting room, all the competitors' stomachs were beginning to hurt. Usually the man who couldn't read the mood-Rudel- would step in to mediate, but now he wasn't even trying to move. Realizing that the one they had their expectations on, Rudel wasn't of any use, everyone waited for their own match to come.

Just like that, the matches went on and on. Rudel and the others fought their ways through, and it was finally time for the semi-finals to commence.



"We'll really have to fix this."

The manager of the arena looked at the parts of the ring Eunius had destroyed in his fight with a fifth year as he reached that conclusion. He had no complaints with the contents of the match itself, but the ring was in tatters. They couldn't hold a match like this.

"It'll take at least an hour."

When he informed the teacher serving as referee, the teachers and staff gathered for a meeting. Whether to carry the match over to the next day, or spend an hour repairing it.

"Then I'll leave it to you to repair it. The next match also looks like one that'll

break the ring, so once that's over, we'll call it a day. The rest will have to wait for tomorrow."

"You make my work sound so worthwhile..."

The manager took a few boys along and began mending the ring with magic. They could just increase the men on the job, but they weren't using any special magic. If anyone without experience unskillfully stuck their hands in, the ring would never hold up. You could call it the tricks of the trade.

But if they continued holding matches in the arena alone, the matches were liable to run into the night. That on their minds, the teachers decided to split up the semi-finals. The magic proving ground was strengthened, and it wouldn't be a problem, they decided. Eunius and Luecke's match would be held in the arena, while Rudel and Aleist would duke it out in the proving grounds.

As the competitors and referees and the students who were helping mend the arena headed off, the audience got into heated debate over which match to see. Both matches had some worth and watching, and contained a connection of fates. Both matches were ones they wanted to see, and the students were heated as well.

"What will you do, Izumi?"

Within all that, the former goddess tried asking Izumi. Izumi thought for just a bit before standing from her seat in the arena and heading off for the magic grounds.

"I'll go see Rudel and Aleist's match. I'm sure he'll be lonely over there with no acquaintances to watch."

Giving an excuse, Izumi pulled the former goddess' hand and walked off.



Over the arena's hour long break, Eunius and Leucke glared at one another. They had both been aware of one another from the moment they were born. As fellow nobles of Courtois, opposing houses would instill the information on their enemies from childhood.

"Did they really have to go this far, normally?"

“... I’m going to pound magic into that heated face of yours, Eunius.”

Hearing those words, Eunius’ fed up face turned to the fearsome smile of a bird of prey. The impression Luecke gave off was even colder than usual. As the two glared at one another, the starting signal resounded through the arena.

“Henceforth, the semi-finals shall commence! Begin!”

Hearing the referee’s voice, the two of them sprung to motion. Eunius thought Luecke would try to take distance, and tried to close the space in an instant. But Luecke took an unexpected action. Luecke also leapt forward, bringing the match to a contest of blades. Eunius was surprised, but perhaps that’s where his genius lay.

“That was a shocker, but that’s all you’ve got? How soft!”

It was the moment he parried the wood sword Luecke thrust out. Eunius sensed danger and leapt back. As expected, to the place he had been standing flew a number of elementary magics.

“You’ve got good instinct. But don’t think this is the end.”

Luecke took a stance with his sword, but this time he used magic to fill in the space between Eunius and himself. Clicking his tongue, Eunius put his all into evasive action as he looked for an opportunity to approach.

He avoided and used the mana in his sword to cut through the magic blasts raining down. Repeating the process, he was thinking of inviting Luecke to expend all his mana. He thought over it, but... he wouldn’t permit himself to do that.

“This is the last time you can get on your high horse!!”

Receiving a few hits of magic, Eunius flooded mana into his pseudo magic sword to move it like a whip. By that, he spread out his reach and launched an attack at Luecke’s neck. But without and panic, Luecke stopped it with the wood sword in his own hands. No, he erased it.

“You’ve surprisingly dull. Even if it’s a sham, it’s no different from a magic sword. In that case, there’s no problem as long as I can put up the right defenses.”

“Oy, oy, what do you think you’re doing... just when things were getting fun, no one was asking for a lecture!”

Caring not for his disappearing magic sword, Eunius leapt straight at Luecke. As the space between them closed in, Luecke fired magic at point black range. It was a self-damaging move he had used in his match with Rudel, and now he used it to create some distance.

“For a battle maniac like you, this is more than enough!”

When Luecke unleashed a stream of intermediate magic, even Eunius took distance. He did, but carrying out the calculations, Luecke read his moves as he aimed. The magics assailing Eunius were high in output and vast in scope. It was impossible to avoid them all.

“Not bad!!!”

But if you can’t avoid, then don’t, thought Eunius as he leapt straight into the magic. Carving them up with his magic sword, and enduring those he couldn’t avoid even so.

“Are you human!?”

Luecke took distance as he prepared his trump card. Feeling that Eunius’ wood sword was nearing its limit, he decided to use that to decide the match. And Eunius also felt his sword’s end drawing near and went on the offense.

“This is the end, Eunius!”

“Don’t make light of me, beansprout!”

Sensing Luecke had prepared something, Eunius put the maximum magic he could into his sword and lowered it at him. Seeing that, Luecke was convinced of his victory. Eunius’ swordplay exceeded Rudel, but if they fought he would lose. Luecke knew the reason why. He had an overwhelming lack of cards in his hands. He was too fixated on forcing his way through with his sword.

So Luecke thought, and even when he had erased the magic sword, Eunius had simply tried the same means again.

“Bastard!”

Eunius’ magic sword didn’t reach Luecke. No, before it could reach, he could

lower it no longer. Eunius was surrounded by Luecke's wall of magic, the wall gradually shrinking in scope. Before that sturdy wall his sword couldn't collapse, Eunius' wooden sword snapped.

"You're surrounded on all sides, and if you try running into the sky, you'll be shot down. There's nothing you can do when you don't have a sword, Eunius."

The magic he had begun preparing from the moment he was running around was a sturdy one. He would have to buy ample time while utilizing a number of different spells, but Luecke had pulled it off. Everyone was convinced of his victory when a cloud of dust rose the sturdy wall fell apart. The sound of crumbling rock resounded through the arena, the spectators swallowed their breath.

"Don't think a wall of dirt would be able to stop me."

Tattered as he was, Eunius walked towards Luecke with an intrigued, ferocious smile on his face. Luecke tried to prepare magic, but Eunius closed the distance in an instant, hammering a fist into his stomach. On that impact greater than anything he had anticipated, Luecke couldn't even understand what had happened as he was blown through the air.

"Just as I thought, it really is hard to do it with your fists. But... this is usable!"

As Luecke tried to stand, Eunius gave pursuit to instill the final blow. This time Luecke put up both his arms to guard, but his crossed arms couldn't withstand the impact. Feeling the sound of breaking bones through his body, Luecke let out a cry. Surrounding his fist with magic, he was slamming them in with brute force. That was all there was to it. That was Eunius' trump card.

"GAAaah!"

"Hah, hah, that's not all there is to it!"

But channelling magic through his broken arms, Luecke used a self-harming attack on Eunius as he swung his fist towards him. An explosion broke out between them sending both sides flying. Eunius waited for the smoke of the explosion to die down, surprised when Luecke leapt out of the cloud. He was surprised, but seeing Luecke's face that had yet to give up, he cried out.

"Nice pluck, but you see..."

As Eunius tried to say something, Luecke cried out as if to answer him. It was the true feelings of the two that just happened to overlap.

“You alone I can’t lose to!”

“You alone I don’t want to lose to!”

Eunius sent a punch at Luecke, but his magic had disappeared. Eunius’ mana was also approaching its limit. And receiving that hit. Luecke launched an attack at his head. His attack perfectly caught Eunius in the jaw.

Both of them were unsteady on their feet, their eyes unable to focus. Just like that, they stopped moving without even the slightest twitch. The referee confirmed their states, and once he found they had both lost consciousness, he declared.

“This match... is a draw!”

As everyone was about to boo out the ref’s answer, a tremor and the sound of an explosion strong enough to reach the arena came from the magic proving ground.

Chapter 64: The Dragon Idiot and the Game Idiot

In the magic proving grounds the match's start came later than Luecke and Eunius'. The reason being the time it took to repair, and the surprising number of people that gathered. The fact that Fina also chose to watch Rudel's match was another reason for the late start. And the reason an explosion resounded from the magic grounds to the arena. It was naturally because of the two locked in battle

"Get serious against me, Rudel!"

From Aleist's shadow, something similar to a black liquid squirmed around, changing shape to come at Rudel. At times a sword, at times a spear, it took on various shapes.

"Aleist... why are you..."

And as Aleist's black weapons stabbed into the ground, they would raise explosions. The cause of the larger explosion lay in that his power suddenly ran rampant. To Rudel, it looked almost as if Aleist was being swung around by his own power. As this was the magic proving ground, the casualties weren't great. More than that, everyone was uninjured.

But the special walls protecting the spectators had all been destroyed.

"You... um aren't you forgetting to conceal it?"

Right, Aleist was getting too high strung, and normally he would have concealed it. He had exposed his characteristics as a black knight before a crowd. As ill fate would have it, it was a stage the second princess Fina was watching.



"Aaaah!"

After the large explosion, when the smoke had cleared up, the former goddess cried out. Izumi to her side was surprised at her reaction.

"I-I just remembered. I remembered, Izumi! If Aleist keeps at it like this, he'll

run out of control!”

“What do you mean by that? It’s true that Aleist has always been a little strange, but I don’t think he’ll go on a rampage.”

“Black knight! Aleist is a black knight!”

Izumi couldn’t understand the former goddess’ cry. It was here that the secrecy of the black knight class was rearing his head. Those around only thought Aleist was using a special sort of magic. At the sudden events, the teachers were late to respond.

To the two of them came Fina with her high knights. Her face was expressionless, but her tone was serious.

“Black knight... tell me the details.”

“T-the strange woman came outtt!”

While the former goddess was fearful of Fina, Rudel and Aleist’s battle continued. A state of Aleist on the offense, and Rudel on the defense carried on

The surrounding students were excited by a fight they had never seen before, and didn’t even try to run. But at this fight they had never seen before, the teachers felt a sense of crisis. They thought to evacuate the place at once, or to suspend the match. But there were few teachers, and the excited students wouldn’t hear them out.

Izumi and the others asked the former goddess about Aleist and Rudel. Once she finished her explanation on the events of the temple and the reason Aleist was training his martial arts, Fina looked at the fighting two.

“This is bad.”

(Bad, really bad! When it comes to black knights, they’re a title with meaning to the royal line. Yet that guy became a black knight... you think I can push him onto my sister?)

As the black knight was a knight with special meaning, Fina knew he would probably be taken into the royal family or palace. But if that happened, it would make it even harder to get her hands on Rudel. As the second princess, she was a much more likely candidate for the black knight’s hand than Aileen.

“Princess, this place is dangerous. We should evacuate...”

On Sophina’s words, Fina voiced approval. But the former goddess alone proposed they stop the two. The reason was simple. If the white and black knights completely awakened to their abilities, they would run out of control. Remembering the brothers who awoke to their powers, the former goddess who had seen their rampage’s face turned pale.

Back when she was a goddess, her body was half-transparent and she had no physical essence. But now her body existed. That was more than enough for the former goddess to realize the danger.

“More importantly, go stop those two. If both of them awaken, they’ll go on a rampage, and something terrible will... this whole place will be destroyed.”

Everyone lent a glance to the fight of Rudel and Aleist. There, Fina looked at the formed goddess and spoke.

“You tell us to stop that?”

(You incompetent! On top of keeping quiet up to now, you want us to stop those two? That’s impossible, foool!!! This strange black thing is stretching and explosion, and it’s all muddy and gross. To be able to fight against that, master is quite a monster himself.)

“We have to stop them! Otherwise they’ll both run amuck!”

“Eh?”

Sophina wanted to evacuate Fina alone, but she held a question at the ‘both’ part. And everyone around began to notice... she was talking about Rudel.

“Rudel’s also a black knight!?”

As Izumi panicked, the former goddess cried out. Cried out so loudly that everyone in the general area ended up hearing her words.

“As. I. Was. Saying! Rudel is the white knight, and Aleist is the black knight!”

The audience had noticed that Rudel and Aleist’s battle was abnormal, and thier excitement was dying down. The cry came just as the area had grown quiet, and the former goddess’ voice resounded all throughout the magic proving grounds.

“You stupid disciple, you’ve sure done it now.”
(Oy, oy! When it comes to the white knight, he’s even dicier than the black knight... why can’t master live a quiet life of the fluff? You make me sad... leaving the jokes aside, you shouted something so important here, you bloody incompetent!!!)



Avoiding darkness in the shape of a sword, Rudel channeled mana into his wooden sword to cut through Aleist’s magic that flew his way. A black something and magic attacks put Rudel on a one-sided defense. That black something in the shape of weapons... that darkness, whether he blocked or parried, it would simply explode. A troublesome thing to no ends.

“I can win, with this I can beat you... I can win against Rudel!”

By gaining confidence in himself, Aleist was growing bolder, and just as the former goddess said, he was beginning to go on a rampage. Rudel dealt with the attacks coming at him, but inside, his concentration was taking a cut. His awakening as a white knight was being dragged out by the black knight Aleist.

(I’m going to lose? I, when I’m supposed to become a dragoon!? I can’t let such a thing come to pass! Even if I discard everything, I have to be the strongest... I have to become the strongest dragoon!!!)

An emotion welling up from his depths, Rudel was being swallowed up without even noticing it. They wanted to win. That was the wish of both sides. And as the two began to be swallowed by the power birthed from doubt, the forces of the white and black knights were drawn out. Their actions paying no heed to surrounding eyes made it almost seem the spectators were completely irrelevant.

By that influence, the shockwaves of their match reached all the way to the audience seats. All the things they had been mindful of to that point, now it all seemed so inconsequential... it was all for victory, it was all for dreams...

Light gathered in Rudel’s left hand and forming the shape of a bolt, he fired it at Aleist. As the bolt of light clashed with Aleist’s darkness, it let off an intense explosion.

“That’s right! Come at me for real, Rudel!”

“Aleissttt!!!”

And this time he sent a consecutive stream of light bolts from his left hand. That downpour of bullets met Aleist’s dark weapons in an intense clash. And Rudel’s pseudo magic sword let off a radiant light as it sublimated into a magic sword of the truest sense. Coinciding with that, Aleist’s magic sword wrapped his own wood sword in what seemed to be black flames.

As the two wood swords met, the sound they gave of had no semblance of what should come from wood hitting wood. The violent clash of mana let off a din close to an explosion accompanied by thunder.

Both sides used their magic to elevate their physical abilities, rampaging to levels beyond their own control. Sensing the danger, the teachers and staff tried to evacuate the students at once. They evacuated, but as progress slowed to a halt around the sole entrance, many students still remained in the magic proving ground.

“With this, I’m number one... I’ll become number onnnnee!!!”

Cried Aleist, but the trail of his sword could never catch Rudel. It couldn’t, but the shockwave it produced destroyed the wall and the hastily prepared benches.

Judging that he wasn’t getting anywhere like this, Rudel ignored the darkness coming at him, approached Aleist and hammered in his sword. The sword driven in could no longer stand, both blades disintegrating simultaneously. So the fight switched into martial arts, and as there were no problems with Aleist’s skills at this point, he confidently went on the offense.

Both boys were too excited to even think of defense. It was the same fist fight they had carried out two years before, but now there lay a hint of madness. A fist clad in darkness, and a fist wrapped in light collided, sending both of them flying. As both rose to their feet, the referee teacher issued a loud proclamation of the match’s suspension.

“Stop it, both of you! The match is suspended, you’re both disqualified!!!”

“... Oh?”

“... That so.”

Hearing that, the two of them gave broad. They could understand by the look in their eyes that the other was thinking the same. Rudel and Aleist amassed their greatest magic on their arms, ignoring the referee and continuing the match. They had already long stopped thinking about some tournament.

All that crossed their minds was how to defeat the bastard before their eyes.



“Princess, quickly!”

Alongside a number of high knights, Sophina protected the students from the aftermath of Rudel and Aleist’s attacks. But the princess Fina insisted that she be the last one to evacuate. At the end of her eyes lay the battle of Rudel and Aleist.

While Fina had been keeping quiet, she suddenly cried out. They turned in surprise to her voice, and it was just as the two had ignored the referee’s words to restart their match.

“Cover everyone!”

Light gathered in Rudel’s two arms, while darkness gathered around Aleist’s. The mana they could sense was enormous. Sensing the danger, she called out to cover the students, and the high knights tried to protect them with barriers of magic.

“Sophina, you help out too! That won’t be enough to stop it...”

(I thought that knowledge was completely useless... I guess the palace manual does come in handy, from time to time.)

Fina recalled the legends of the Black and White Knights she had been told from her childhood. She thought they were lies, but seeing the scenes unfold before her eyes, she had no choice but to believe. The palace had passed down the knowledge of how to prepare against a white and black knight.

Thinking back to it, Fina could feel those two were going to let out their strongest attacks. Giving up on evacuation, they could only endure it where they stood.

“But princess!”

“Captain! Aleist-dono is...!”

Turning her gaze back to the two at her subordinate’s words, Sophina regretted letting turning her attention to Fina for a moment. The black darkness Aleist had pulled out the start had taken on a snake-like shape as it assailed the surroundings. Several dozens of black oversized serpents were destroying the magic proving ground and the area around it.

Rudel avoided and tried to get in an attack in the gap this grandiose technique had made.

It was at that moment that a single serpent made its way towards Fina. That snake that headed towards Izumi and the rest of Rudel’s acquaintances watching the match was beginning to multiply in numbers.



“Don’t run, Rudel!!!”

Aleist couldn’t properly control the black snakes. What’s more, he wasn’t looking at the surrounding situation. You could say the same was true for Rudel who he fought. Ignoring all around him, Rudel thought of nothing but defeating Aleist, and at the moment Aleist showed an opening, he thought he had a chance of winning.

“This is the end, Aleist!”

(I’ll win this. I’ll win and become the strongest dragoon...!)

While Rudel rejoiced within, his eyes chanced upon the black snake attacking Izumi and the others behind Aleist. After a moment of hesitation, Rudel chose to prioritize defeating Aleist over whatever was going on.

(There are high knights there, so it’s not a problem. No, more than that, I must aim to be a dragoon! Everything else is unnecessary to me! All of it, all of it is unnecessary!!!)

‘Why are you lying to me?’

(... At a time like this...!)

In that instant, the best opportunity he had to attack Aleist, Rudel recalled his little sister Lena's words. He wavered and mulled... Rudel didn't have that sort of time to spare, but his body was already reacting to the words recalled. He reacted, and as the course of action he could take floated up in his head, Rudel cried out.

What he had found in the documents, the White Knight's characteristic shield of light... Rudel imagined it.

"... Shield of light, protect them...!!!"

While he had changed from offense to defense, Rudel was ironically left defenseless. Seeing that, Aleist mercilessly struck him down with a black snake.

"It's my win!"



The black snake coming at them vanished after it was blocked by the shield of light. Witnessing that scene, Izumi was unable to understand what had happened, but she sent a glance in Rudel's direction.

"Rudel!"

Looking around, as if to protect the other students in a similar manage, several dozens of shields were floating in the air of the magic proving grounds. Those shields each larger than a single person had completely shut in the black snakes. But sealed in with them, Rudel was assailed by the darkness.

Convinced of his victory, Aleist laughed and erased the snakes; the shields of light disappeared alongside them. Rudel was on the ground while Aleist stood. From just a glance, it looked like Aleist was the winner, but the both of them had been disqualified. This match was also a draw... no, in the first place, the individuals' tournament was put on hold.

Within the academy's lengthy history, it was the first tournament to fail to come out with a victor.

Ignoring Aleist's grand laugh, Izumi raced over to Rudel. Digging out his half-rubble-buried body, she held him up and confirmed he was still breathing. The relief caused her tears to come out, and once those tears hit his face, Rudel

opened his eyes.

“Ah... looks like I failed again.”

“You idiot, why did you do something like that, Rudel!?”

Perhaps Rudel’s consciousness wasn’t clear as he didn’t know what he was supposed to response. That’s why...

“When I tried to throw away everything, I just couldn’t... my little sister’s going to scold me.”

After saying just that, Rudel lost consciousness again. Izumi embraced Rudel, and seeing that, Aleist regained his sanity. Seeing Rudel and the surrounding situation, he sat as if to hold himself.

“I-I never intended to... this isn’t what I...”

The teachers gathered to subdue him, and they tried to take away Rudel as well. He had caused such a problem. Punishment was only natural. But there, Fina held back the teachers.

“Do not lay a hand on those two. Carry them to the infirmary, and await orders from the palace.”

“But princess! After they’ve done so...”

“I am not saying this from the standing of a student. I am giving an order as Fina, the second princess of this country... call the headmaster.”

“... Yes.”

And like that, their identities as the White and Black Knights were exposed to the palace.

Chapter 65: The Four Idiots and the Three

The individuals' tournament of the second term ended with an unprecedented lack of a champion. The semi-finals ended with an unsavory pair of a draw and a disqualification. And at this tournament that was a stream of unprecedents, starting with the headmaster, the teachers, and the staff held their heads.

The fact that Rudel was the White Knight and Aleist was the Black Knight had been relayed to the palace. The palace would be the ones dealing with them, and whatever the case, the academy would not be able to pass down any punishment. Luckily, there hadn't been any deaths at the destroyed magic proving ground. Only a few were injured in the evacuation.

The center of all this talk, Rudel and Aleist were in the infirmary. Rudel was injured, and Aleist was hospitalized for examination. It goes without saying that Luecke and Eunius were injured and hospitalized as well.



"Oy, so how does it feel Mister Misunderstanding? How does it feel to make an elementary mistake and cause a ruckus over this whole duel mess?"

"... Eunius, so you know the whole time."

"Aaah, what am I supposed to do now."

"Izumi, I think I just saw a dragon! That was Lilim-san's dragon, there's no doubt about it!"

The four were pushed into the most extravagant room of the infirmary, and all but Aleist were in serious condition. Three of them lay in bandages and plaster, while the remaining one hugged his knees on his bed, muttering foreboding things to himself. Before the four of them, Izumi distributed fruit to them all.

"Rudel! Why didn't you tell me either!?"

"? ... About my sister? I certainly bear some responsibility for the misunderstanding that came about. However... Luecke, you knew about

Erselica, didn't you?"

Luecke was part of high society, and he knew of Erselica. He knew, but the girl Lena he met just beforehand had been more than enough to fill his head. What's more, he didn't quite recognize Erselica as Rudel's little sister. To make matters worse, Eunius had long since noticed his mistake.

"Normally, you wouldn't be able to settle an engagement to one of the Three Lords with a mistress' child, right? And who'd have thought you'd fall in love at first sight and challenge someone to a duel?"

Eunius guffawed as he pointed a finger at Luecke. Meanwhile, Luecke resolved himself to be teased on this matter for a long time to come. But emotionally, he felt relief that he had made a misunderstanding.

"I should have thought harder too. It's only natural for Erselica's engagement to be decided before Lena's. Luecke, I'm sorry, but Erselica is..."

"You're wrong, Rudel! The one I fell for is Lena!"

Luecke corrected Rudel's misunderstanding. Looking at those three, Aleist felt a bit envious.

(How nice, I want to talk about love too. Should I bring up Millia... no, there's no way I could consult with these members.)

As Izumi looked at the four, she felt that the cause of all this had been Lena. The line that put Rudel off, and Luecke's love that had caused the duel. She was quite a peculiar girl, or so Izumi thought of her.

And as the four were making a ruckus, a single girl entered the sickroom. They had been informed beforehand, so everyone thought it was right about time as they turned to their guest. The girl was Yunia Luneice, the daughter of a Marquis House. Her hair cut straight at her shoulders and her glasses were the girl's most discerning features.

The girl was a second year of the fundamental curriculum. During the tournament period, it was only natural for the fundamental curriculum students to be off in their wilderness training. Once that was over, she made a request to meet Aleist in the infirmary. As she was a Marquis' daughter, she was let through as a special case.

“P-pardon my intrusion.”

Giving an awkward greeting, Yunia offered a bow to the Three Lords’ children before making for Aleist. Walking before Aleist as he sat on the bed, she suddenly handed over a letter. Perhaps she was nervous as her hands were shaking.

“...? What’s this?”

Aleist accepted the letter and started at it in wonder. Looking at Yunia’s reddened face and the cutesy letter, everyone thought. She didn’t have to give it to him in such a place... but Aleist hadn’t noticed. In his perplexion he tried to open it on the spot, and Yunia hurriedly stopped him.

“S-senpai! U-um, could you please have a look at it later?”

“Eh? Oh, sure.”

Leaving only those words, Yunia retreated from the sickroom. The girl herself left with quick, bashful steps.

“... I wonder what it could be.”

Seeing Aleist had still yet to realize, Rudel opened his mouth.

“Isn’t that a challenge to a duel? The way that girl carried her body wasn’t half bad.”

Realizing that Rudel hadn’t noticed either, the remaining three breathed out sighs. And opening the letter then and there, Aleist felt quite reluctant to duel a girl as he read it thought. After reading it once, his hands started shaking as he read it again.

“W-what do I do!?”

“Calm down, Aleist. Whether you decline or accept, your sincerity is what’s important. I’m sure it’s hard going up against a girl, but as you are now, you have an ample chance of winning without harming your opponent.”

“... Rudel, you still think this is a duel? And what’s gotten into you? Haven’t you been confessed to left and right?”

Luecke pointed out Rudel’s misunderstanding, but Aleist wasn’t making a fuss

over the confession itself. It was only now that he realized the sender was Yunia Luneice. Yunia of the chestnut hair had been a romance target. A character with a standing as the main character's junior.

Having come so far, Aleist's first love event had sprung forth.

The contents of the confession in the letter closely resembled what he saw in the event. It was a confession from the game's romance characters he had long given up on that surprised Aleist.

"She's the daughter of a marquis, right? That's not a bad match with you. Why don't you try going out with her?"

Eunius gave some uninterested advice, but Aleist was in love with Millia. In-game, he had confidence he could capture five or six, but when it came to reality, his morals got in the way. The current Aleist had lost any aspirations of a harem.

"... There's someone I like."

On the words Aleist muttered, Luecke couldn't overlook an individual besides himself who would concede a topic to be teased on. Knowing the time had come, Luecke tried to draw the info from Aleist.

"Oh? And who would that be, Aleist? I'd like to hear by all means."

"The truth is, I like Millia of the elven... eh!?"

Just as Aleist called out the name, the second princess Fina entered the sick room. The sudden event surprised those around, but as Fina was a fellow student at present, they offered her some light bows.

"Oh, what might you be talking about?"

(When it comes to Millia, she's that elf in master's year, right? When I thought he was a homo, to think he was a kindred spirit in pursuit of the fluff... looks like these eyes have a long way to go.)

Having shrewdly listened in from beyond the door, Fina chose the perfect timing to make her entrance. Having observed her from behind, Sophina was fed up by her sheer shamelessness.

Just as Aleist's awareness of events was growing thin, ironically enough, an

event had come straight to him.



In a deep and dark forest, three small monsters—a black fog, a boar and a little bird—were discussing matters to come. They had originally possessed massive bodies, but there was a reason they had shrunk to such a size. Mana deficiency. They lacked the mana required to maintain their being.

‘It’s all your fault we cannot return!’

“Curse me, so you intend to push the blame onto me?”

‘I don’t really care, but seriously, what are we going to do?’

The boar chastised the fog while the bird thought of the future. The reason it had come to this was because the black fog had so easily promised Rudel it would prepare a dragon for him. Also, while they thought they would become one, that had proved impossible. The boar and the bird had tried to merge into the fog, but the wickedness of the emotions she had absorbed prevented that.

To be more precise, she had become a different existence from what she was when she was created.

‘We’re only here because you promised so easily! Yet without a dragon in our grasp, we shall fade away. When we don’t even have any means to obtain one, why did you say such a thing!?’

‘It does seem we are to face an embarrassing end. If we are to disappear without fulfilling our promise... after you put on such a cool act.’

“Erk... you needn’t say it!”

When they didn’t have any means to obtain a dragon, the black fog had promised without due consideration. But even so, they had come into contact and negotiated with the dragons. The bird had been killed by a Red dragon, so Red dragons were taken out of the running. They were dragons of violent temperament to begin with.

The murdered bird came down with a trauma and was vehemently against it.

That left the Wind Dragon, Water Dragon, and Gaia Dragon; those three species. They had come to the deep forests where the dragons lived to

negotiate. But the Wind Dragon mistook them as prey and gave chase, negotiations with the Water Dragon failed, and the Gaia Dragon wouldn't come out of the earth.

They had made zero progress.

'More importantly, after achieving nothing in negotiations with the Water Dragon, it is strange for me to be the only one on the block.'

The black fog chastised the bird who carried out negotiations. But the bird refuted that opinion.

'The problem came even before negotiations came in the question. The first words that came out of that dragon's mouth were, 'I'm not letting anyone besides Marty ride on my back', giving no leeway for discussion.'

Surprisingly enough, there was a Water Dragon who was willing to hear them out, but that dragon had no interest in any riders but the individual who had ridden it before. So in the end, the negotiations were a failure. Even among the water dragons who inhabited the waterfront, it was quite a powerful and beautiful dragon.

'So what are we going to do now!? At this rate, we will fruitlessly fade away.'

'...'

'...'

The three thought and decided to head for the Gaia Dragon they had yet to try negotiating with. Preferring the insides of the earth, it was the dragon that boasted the largest body among the four varieties. It was equipped with four wings, but due to its large build, flying wasn't its forte.

The Gaia Dragon was an unpopular choice among dragoons. Its flight speed was low, making it difficult to evade enemy attacks. It was a hard-to-handle dragon that specialized in its sturdiness, offense, and defense.

'Since it has come to this, we must negotiate with the last Gaia Dragon. If we disappear like this, it will put a scar on our honor.'

In order to negotiate, the black fog made for the caves the Gaia Dragons lives. The other two followed behind. Those three beings entrusted their deepest

wishes to their last hope, the Gaia Dragon.

Chapter 66: The Harem and the Royal Guard

The first princess of Courtois, Aileen. Ever since she was attacked by monsters, she had developed an intense hate of demi-humans. The beastmen tribes were no exception, and she even drove the demi-human knights around her from the castle. In Courtois that was harsh on demi-humans from the start, that didn't prove to be a problem.

But Aileen was, as Fina would put it, a fluff hater. She ended up imagining demi-humans whenever she saw them. Even if she could endure horses and other necessary animals, she couldn't permit the pet dog the family treasured.

"Get rid of this beast!"

With just those words, the large and fluffy pet dog was gotten rid of. Her family members, the king and queen only learned of this after the fact, but with the blow Aileen suffered to her heart, they couldn't condemn her for it. But the one who never learned of that dog's disposal was Fina.

Fina doted on her beloved dog. With her lack of expression, at the time, those around were troubled with how to deal with her. Within all that, only the dog could sense her emotions. When she was lonely he would snuggle close. When she wanted to cry he would stay by her side. He was a gentle dog.

Aileen's attack happened when she was young. And Fina was even younger. At her age, everyone around tried to be mindful, and she was never told about the dog. With her expressionless face and the fact she hadn't yet learned to properly talk, they were all sure she would forget about him in no time.

From the day her beloved dog disappeared, Fina would go search for him every day. She had grown bigger, and even if she no longer knew what she was searching for, Fina would search the palace for her beloved dog on vague memories she could barely recall.

Even now, somewhere in her heart, Fina searched for her fluffy pet dog.



"... A dream?"

(I kinda get the feeling I had the bestest fluffiest dog by my side...?)

Opening her eyes on the bed of her private room, her eyes stopped on Mii of the white cat tribe sleeping beside her. Her soft breaths as she slept in peace... Fina expressionlessly stroked her head. And she remembered the dog she had met in a dream.

“Am I lonely?”

(It must be god’s way of telling me not just a white cat, I should get someone of the dog tribe in my hands as well. Hmm... what a greedy woman am I.)

If he saw her now, even her pet dog would shake his head to deny it. But paying no mind to that, Fina started fluffing Mii up.

“P-princess! Good morning... where do you think you’re fondling!?”

Waking up from the fluffing, Mii noticed that Fina was stroking and fondling her all over.

“Good morning Mii.”

(Where? Everywhere of course, my little kitten!!!)



“The punishment is on hold?”

“Yeah, to be quite honest, this is a problem beyond the academy’s hands. Though we’ll still be demanding repair charges for the proving ground from both your houses.”

Rudel and Aleist had been summoned by the headmaster. In his office, they were informed of what was to come. The palace’s orders only told them to be zealous in their studies at the academy.

Opinions were divided in the palace, and they were only trying to stall for time. Luckily enough, they were both already knights of the country. While they would face some increased discomforts, it was concluded there would be no problem for them to continue studying hard at the academy.

“B-but what are we supposed to do henceforth?”

“Aleist-kun, just act nor... no, just don’t cause any problems. You are both talented students, so keep studying until you graduate. But when it comes to

your future careers, you might have to follow the palace's orders."

Rudel reacted to those words. On those vague words of 'the palace's orders', it felt as if his path to be a dragoon was far.

"Headmaster, around when will we be able to hear the palace's orders?"

"At the very least, the second term of your fifth year... around a year. Right, you have a year, Rudel-kun."

Rudel understood what the headmaster wanted to say, as he gave the date the palace said it would issue its orders. You have to do something in that one-year timespan. That's how Rudel took it.

"Thank you, Headmaster."

After giving a bow, Rudel withdrew from the headmaster's office. And left behind, Aleist also bowed and chased after him. In the office, the headmaster looked at the doorway they had left through as he muttered.

"A year, that's how long you have for your efforts to bear fruit."

But wouldn't Rudel be able to accomplish it? The headmaster had his hopes.



"Obtain a dragon in a year? Are you sane, Rudel?"

Chancing by Luecke on his way back from the headmaster's office, Rudel told him of the palace's orders and the headmaster's words. And he told Luecke his current objective.

"I'm lucid. If I don't do something in this period, the royal palace is going to chain me down. With the sturdiest of chains at that... now's all I have."

"I'm sure there are a number of means, but are you going to go out searching at once?"

Go and search... right, apart from the gray dragons managed by the country, he would have to go looking in the deep forests the dragons made their homes. But while there were dragons who would tie contracts with humans, there were others who would attack them. If they didn't recognize him, he would have to resolve himself to fight.

And the forest was strictly managed by the country. In order to meet the country's valuable fighting force, the dragons, you would have to undertake harsh examinations. Even if he wanted to be granted a gray dragon, it was only natural as he would be becoming one of the country's elite dragoons.

From Rudel's lineage and the fact the king thought well of him, the examination wouldn't be a problem... Luecke thought. But dragons weren't the sort of existence that would recognize you solely if you had talent. Even if Rudel was strong, if the dragons wouldn't recognize it or came to hate him, that was the end.

"Are gray dragons no good?"

"I-it's not like I hate gray dragons or anything! But taking the time into account, it won't be possible. There are quite a few knights who set out to be dragoons due to their popularity, and dragons have a high maintenance cost. There are no spare dragons idling around so I would have to wait for someone to retire."

If a dragoon retired or perished in battle, an opening would come out. But when they died in battle, it was often the case the dragon would die as well. That in mind, one would generally have to wait for an active dragoon to retire if they wished to obtain a gray dragon.

"... The examinations will take time too, right? Then you should keep the option in your field of vision. Wild dragons are much too dangerous."

Right, the fact the dragoon vice-captain rode a gray dragon was a sort of proof. Dragons generally didn't recognize mankind. It wasn't very common for anyone to receive their blessing. Both Cattleya and Lilim were abnormal existences among the dragoons.

"You're right. I'll keep that in mind. More importantly, why are you keeping silent, Aleist?"

Aleist was surprised to have the conversation suddenly turn his way. After mulling over whether to say it or not, he decided to consult with Rudel and Luecke.

"T-the truth is... I was confessed to."

“By Yunia? Then there’s no helping that you mull over it. I heard you said you had someone in mind and rejected her... well, her house just put her up to it, wanting some connections to your house.”

Luecke recalled the rumors he had heard from his followers, and Aleist knew that was how it went in the game so he wasn’t surprised. He wasn’t surprised, but the problem wasn’t Yunia.

“That’s not it. Yunia is one thing, but this time, another girl confessed to me.”

“You’re as popular as ever, Aleist.”

While Aleist hung his head, Rudel spoke with a smile. Aleist continued on.

“The first years Seli and Juju confessed to me.”

Hearing those names, Luecke was surprised. Luecke was on the dimmer side when it came to women, but even he knew those names. They were famous within the academy.

“... the former noble Seli and the tiger tribe’s princess. I’ve heard Seli’s swordplay might even line her up with Eunius, and then there’s that girl who’s known for being small for a tiger tribe woman. You have it rough.”

They were both pretty. Imagining those two you could even call beauties, Luecke felt pity for Aleist. The reason was simple. They were pretty, but they had strong personalities. The strong-willed female knight, and the princess of the tribe with the strongest martial arts. If it were him, he’d reject them, thought Luecke.

In their event, Aleist would be smacked as a means of them hiding their embarrassment. It’s because he knew it would happen that he was so depressed. There was no pain beyond the screen, but within it, the protagonist was writhing on the floor. And right now, he knew that would happen to him.

“I’ve heard those two names before. I don’t really know the specifics, but it’s important to make things clear, Aleist.”

“If you reject them you get hit. If you date them you get hit. What am I even... but I don’t want to give up on Millia.”

Rudel and Luecke pat Aleist’s depressed shoulders. Ever since Aleist

awakened as a black knight, numerous confession events from numerous girls had sprung up. Among them were some who aimed for him solely as a valuable gem, but there were some who just honest-to-goodness liked him.



After the palace learned of the black and white knights, Rudel's dragoon application become a problem. The examinations showed no problem, but that was as an individual. Was there really a need to make the Arses House's eldest son and the white knight Rudel a dragoon? It had caused some dispute in the palace.

"The white knight a dragoon? As if we could accept such a thing!"

"Then you say treating him as a high knight would be more proper?"

"Even if they're waning, he's one of the Three Lords. Just put him to work as a feudal lord."

"We should keep him under management at the palace! A dragoon is no more than a simple knight!"

"The problem's if he gets a dragon and ends up running away."

"That's an if! Reality might have him killed by that very same dragon."

That drawn-on meeting had been going on for a number of days, and it didn't look as if it were reaching an end. But there, a single piece of good news came out. A single dragoon knight put in a retirement request giving his old age as the reason.

"A gray dragon has opened up?"

The one reporting to the king was the vice-captain of the dragoons. Hearing that report, the king proposed to grant Rudel that dragon. The statesmen participating in that meeting decided to take up that request. But they decided to put on a bit of a condition.

Even if they gave him a dragon, they wouldn't let him fly freely. Give him status and fame, and a title in name alone... that was the statesmen's decision. Even if he rode a dragon, they wouldn't make him a dragoon. From their point of view, they needed Rudel and Aleist to become symbols.

"Won't there be some opposition if we forcefully push him into it?"

"He'll be a knight recognized by a dragon. Where lies the problem?"

“There’ll be backlash regardless.”

“Then we just have to smooth it over, be it in appearance alone.”

The meeting went on, and certain things were decided. It was to use a single gray dragon to select the captain of the royal guard. The royal guard captain also got a dragon, and everyone apart from the high knights could try for the position. Those were the contents.

Meaning they would make it seem as if Rudel was chosen before everyone’s eyes. It was a setup. A completely new organization called the royal guard was being formed for the sake of Rudel alone. Meanwhile, the black knight Aleist was from a noble house you could call upstarts... there were any number of ways to get him under their wing, the ministers thought.

“His obsession with dragons was the problem, so on the contrary, well give him one, eh.”

“We were just troubled by his lack of interest in status or power. This is just right.”

“You need only give a toy to a noisy child.”

The ministers who had worried over their white knight problem, their nerves grew lax as if finally headed towards its resolution. And hearing the talks of those statesmen, the new royal guard became the hottest rumor among the palace’s servants. As the rumor spread on it was followed by embellishments and the lies some added on for mischief’s sake until eventually, Aileen caught wind of it.



In order to confirm the truth of the rumor, Aileen called out to a single minister. Successfully grasping the weakness that lay in his corruption, Aileen succeeded in confirming its authenticity.

“Then the formation of the royal guard truly has been decided.”

In a secret meeting behind closed doors, Aileen was protected by a high knight who got along with her as she talked to the minister.

“Y-yes! For no other reason than to push Rudel into it, the unit’s formation has been decided. Once he takes position, it is thought he will be shifted over to

territory management...”

“I don’t care about that!”

Aileen interrupted the minister’s words and made a certain proposal.

“Well then statesman, around when will the selection open up?”

“At earliest, when both Rudel and Aleist are in their graduating years.”

Hearing those words, Aileen made two requestion.

“Then I have two things to ask of you, statesman. First, have them hold the exhibition in the second term. When the matter’s still hazy it should be possible. As for the other, there’s an individual I want you to include by all means.”

“? I don’t really mind, but at the very least, it will be difficult unless they have obtained knight qualifications.”

Aileen smiled and told the minister it wouldn’t be a problem. The future she envisioned went as follows. Having just obtained knight qualifications, Fritz managed to be chosen by a dragon in the exhibition he just happened to participate in. Aileen knew how to make it happen.

After the minister left, Aileen recalled her hated Rudel and smiled.

(I shall put you to shame for everyone to see! For Rudel who humiliated Fritz-sama, I shall be the one to get revenge!!!)

The corruption of a minister with influence over the exhibition. Having been able to get her hands on such information, from Aileen’s point of view, it was the greatest of luck. But from the point of view of the setting, it wasn’t luck or anything else. It was simply an event.

Chapter 67: The Three and the Dragon

“Royal guard? I’ve decided to decline that one.”

Hearing the rumors of the palace’s movements, Eunius had come over to Rudel. He had heard they had prepared a gray dragon and entire organization called the royal guard for him. Before class began, he sat to Rudel’s side, and hearing Rudel’s reply, Eunius was surprised. Your dreams are coming true, is what he was about to say.

But Rudel’s response was quick and easy.

“D-dude! When you’ll get your hands on a dragon, why are you rejecting it!? You’re not going to tell me you prefer natural ones, are you?”

“Natural? I do like wild dragons, but I like gray dragons as well. Perhaps I phrased it wrong... I did receive an order to participate in the selection of the royal guard captain. So I said I didn’t want to unless they examined my qualifications to be a dragoon. When I did that, I passed their examinations in a flash. They’re probably misunderstanding things over there, but my goal is to obtain a dragon before I participate in that event!”

In Rudel’s mind, he had to obtain a dragon in the time space before the selection test took place, so he couldn’t become the guard captain. Eunius couldn’t forgive how those idiots at the palace who didn’t know Rudel had probably just passed him through the examinations to soothe the tantrums of a selfish child.

“I understand well that those folks at the palace don’t know a thing about you. That aside, are you going off to search for a dragon at once?”

Rudel thought a bit before shaking his head.

“No, I’ve only just learned of my own inadequacies at the tournament. I do want to hurry here, but preparations are important... I think I’ll try for the extended break in the first term of our fifth year.”

As he spoke with Eunius, Rudel thought over the time it would take him to get in control of his power. At the start of the second term was the royal guard

captain selection test. Thinking of it like that, his time limit was cut off at a year.

Whether to think time was scarce or to be thankful he had so much time to begin with... Rudel was of the later. More than anything, Rudel was happy he had passed the examination to become a dragoon. He was overflowing with motivation.

“Ah, come to think of it, I have a promise with the tiger tribe after class. Want to come too, Eunius?”

As Rudel recalled something, Eunius felt somewhat dissatisfied. But over his worries, he decided to prioritize his intrigue. If his guesses were right, then this would be something quite interesting for Eunius.

“Sounds interesting. I’ll be there.”



“The royal guard’s selection exam...”

(Is there really any point in making such an organization? Their duties overlap with the high knights’ jurisdiction, and I’m sure their resentment will explode if the protection of the royal line is snatched up from them. Well, master’s the white knight, so they’ll probably step down.)

Fina heard out Sophina’s report of what had been decided at the palace. Sophina didn’t seem overly resentful, but she didn’t seem happy about the foundation of an organization that appeared to exist only to say her own kind wasn’t trusted. Fina could sense it.

“In the second term of next year, the selection exam will be carried out, this academy’s students included. As long as you have knight qualifications, you’ll be able to take part, so the number of applicants has grown considerably.”

“Are you going to have a go, Sophina?”

(She lives for her work, so it’s not a bad idea for her to try it. More than that, it would be funny if she appealed the fact that any more work would mean she’d have to give up on marriage. And I’ll get a fluffier high knight to be my... oy, oyoyoy!!! This is my chance! What am I sitting back here for!? Master can be royal guard captain, and the members will all be fluf... yeah, not happening.)

Fina thought to create the fluff unit of her dreams, but she gave up as soon as

she recalled her sister was at the royal palace. Between Aileen and Fina, if one had to say who was treasured more, Aileen's name would rise. Beautiful as she was with her flaw(?) / special skill(?) of expressionlessness, Fina couldn't help but be mismatched.

"... High knights cannot participate. This is an order from our captain as well."

Sophina informed Fina that none of the high knights would take part. This was also a form of protest, but with the birth of the white and black knights, it was also a form of resignation. That was just how much attention the existences of Rudel and Aleist were collecting at the palace.

"Participation is free. And abstaining is also free... so your organizations will never be able to cooperate."

(This is going to be a pain. Well, at this rate, the royal guard will be guarding the royal line on the surface, and behind the scenes, it'll all be the same as before, perhaps? Father's involved, so I doubt I'll have to do anything.)

"We will cooperate, but we do have our pride."

"I see."

(No matter where he goes, master has his troubles... ah!)

"That master will become royal guard captain is already set in stone, right Sophina? But isn't the seat of vice-captain still open? Master is too inexperienced to ensure the prosperity of the royal guard, Sophina."

(Now what will you do. How will you respond? Will you spring at the chance to be alone with master, or will you give up... what sort of choice will you make?)

Just as Fina thought, Sophina reacted. She thought a bit, and her face began turning red. Laughing with, Fina expressionlessly enjoyed her form.

"T-that is one thing, but high knights c-cannot participate, so..."

"I see, how unfortunate, Sophina."

(Ooh, it's working, it's working! Are you irritated? You're irritated, aren't you, Sophina!)



"Don't lose boss!"

“Win for our, no, for the tiger tribe’s future!”

“Dammit, Rudel-san’s way too strong.”

In the academy’s training grounds, starting with the men and woman of the tiger tribe, an outstanding number had gathered to watch the match. A fifth year boy, representative of the tiger tribe, fought Rudel one on one. Both sides had requested a bare-handed brawl, and by that, both sides had removed their coats and met in an intense exchange of blows.

“Hmn!”

The tiger tribe representative, from his intimidating difference in height, everyone thought the battle would proceed with his advantage. But Rudel evaded into the bosom of the man’s over-two-meter stature, challenging him without fear.

“Rudel has the advantage in speed and power. To a beastmen unskilled in the manipulation of mana, he’s a mismatched foe against the current Rudel.”

Looking at the fight, Luecke spoke, but Eunius offered a rebuttal.

“This is why you thickheads are... he’s stronger, but when it comes to fists, that tiger has the advantage. Apart from reach, his sturdy body’s a thread in itself, and when it comes to the martial arts themselves, Rudel’s losing. When it comes to the gap in technique, the tiger tribe has the advantage.”

Eunius explained how the tiger tribe man enduring Rudel’s offense had the offensive. In truth, all of Rudel’s blows had been blocked. Nearby the two spectators, Aleist also watched the battle in fear.

“No! That guy’s got exceptional strength even within the tiger tribe! I wasn’t a match for him. More importantly, you know... doesn’t anyone here think we should stop this fight?”

“Why? This was a promise, right?”

You just don’t get it, Aleist. This is a promise between men.

Neither Luecke nor Eunius would lend Aleist an ear. As his final home, Aleist turned to Izumi beside them. But the one who noticed his glance was the extra.

“What’re you looking at?”

The former goddess to Izumi's side glared at Aleist.

"Not you! Just keep quiet a second, pudding for brains! ... Shirasagi-san, is it really alright to let them fight like this? Wouldn't it be better that they stopped?"

Watching over the serious exchange, Izumi answered without taking her eyes off of Rudel.

"It's alright. He has a secret move in store."

"... H-huh? I'm the strange one!? Am I the strange one!?"

Aleist mulled as he usually did, and to his side stood the girl who headed the tiger tribe. A hundred-and-eighty-centimeter body on the short side of the tiger tribe, and hair that could neither be called long or short. Her strong-willed eyes and tan skin characterized the girl Juju.

"You're not strange. You're not strange at all, Aleist!"

Being consoled did make Aleist happy, but he couldn't take his mind off Millia, who was similarly watching the fight. Millia was still staring at Rudel, and that she wasn't looking his way was a relief. Though it's true he was slightly dissatisfied with that as well.

"How uncivilized. Aleist-sama, what do you think of Rudel-dono?"

And standing to his other side was Seli. Her blond hair growing to her waist, the standing figure of the skilled swordswoman was a sight to be seen. Her skills were such that Eunius wished she was a man. And for some reason, she held affection towards Aleist.

"How? No, his style's savage or rather violent. More importantly, why are the tiger tribe women cheering Rudel on!? That's the thing that's mystifying me now, and even the other beast tribe girls are... Rudel sure is popular."

"That's not true. You're also highly popular, Aleist-sama."

"Yeah, Aleist is cool."

On those responses, Aleist mulled over how to respond. He was happy, but right now his heart was set on Millia. He ran away with a vague answer. And it was at that moment. The battle was about to reach its conclusion.

“There!!!”

As the tiger man swung at him, Rudel stepped into his chest, grabbed his arm, and took a stance to shoulder him on his back. It was a shoulder throw. Normally, the tiger tribe man would never let him slip in, but his stamina was reaching its end from his prolonged fight with Rudel. He had made a moment's gap.

Flying through the air, the tiger man was slammed into the ground.

“B-boss!!!”

The battle ended as Rudel's win. Before the lines of tiger tribe men bursting into tears, Rudel and Izumi felt some pity. So there, they decided to teach with some conditions attached.



That dragon had wormed its way deep into the earth. It had taken an existing cave and tunneled in even further to make sure it would never meet another. Even bigger than dragons of the same species, it was a dragon who boasted magnificent power. At this point, it was nothing but bones with not a vestige of its former glory.

That dragon that had been born as a Gaia Dragon was different from the others, a dragon called a sub-species. Bigger than all the other dragons, its greatest characteristic was its arms. Its two arms were exceptionally large. Both were several times larger than its fellow Gaia Dragons.

And once that brought about difficulty to its flight, its wings had grown bigger as well. If one had to say, Gaia Dragons were largest from left to right, but when that dragon was put against its fellow compatriots, its body looked slender. Its horizontal width was the same, but as all its limbs were embellished, the body between them looked slim.

The remains of such a dragon, after hundreds of years had gone by, it had finally been unearthed by the three.

“... Oy, isn't this bad?”

Positioning itself as if to hide in the shadows, the boar looked into the

depths of the dead dragon's cave. The bird also hid as it confirmed the situation.

'Is it miasma? There's hatred and envy swirling around here. Why did you come to such a place? Normally, this is what we would avoid.'

The black fog had mixed in with the darkness and could now only be known as a voice.

'I wanted a normal dragon too! But since all the dragons refused, we have no choice but to turn to our final means.'

'Final?'

'It's already over. Give up.'

'After putting on such a show, like hell we can pull back at this point!'

'You just said 'we', did you not!? Do not casually tossed us joint liability!'

'If we can no longer become one, then we must be individual existences. The responsibility is yours alone!'

While it may have sounded heartless, the boar and bird hadn't promised anything to Rudel. It was the black fog's arbitrary decision. The black fog ignored them as it continued its talk.

'Using the husk of this dragon, I shall become the dragon myself. If I do, then that means I honored the promise.'

'That's fine and all, but wouldn't that make you a sham?'

'He has a point. You're not as strong as a dragon. You'll just be a fake.'

'We won't know unless we try! Here I go...'

Saying that, the black fog approached the dragon. When it came to dragons, both their bones and flesh were valuable materials, so it was rare to find one's remains. While dragons themselves would occasionally show respect to dead dragons, they didn't show any interest towards their corpses. So there were those who made a living coming to the forest to retrieve them.

In such a situation, it was rare to find a corpse in such a complete state. However...

‘I have a bad feeling about this.’

‘There were negative emotions swirling around here from the start, and there’s even more gathering. This is dangerous.’

The two of them thought the black fog would turn back. Unfortunately, their expectations were off the mark. From the depths of the cave, they could hear the black fog cry out.

‘Wait, no, this is a bit... impossibbbbleee!!!’

Chapter 68: The Elf Sisters and Flan

Loneliness, hatred, desire... the Gaia Dragon's lair tainted by conflicting emotions, and the black fog was absorbed and taken in. She maintained her own ego, but she didn't carry enough power to resist the dragon corpse. Even so, she looked into the emotions surrounding the dragon, and there were various things she managed to see.

As a subspecies, this dragon had been distanced from the others. While among fellow dragons, it had been isolated from the forest. It spent long years in the depths of the earth lamenting until it became a corpse.

But the dragon had a role. As an undead dragon, its role was to fight the protagonist. After graduation, the protagonist's party would be stationed in the 'Royal Guard', a new organization formed by the country, and the protagonist himself would become their captain. The other members were, of course, his harem members.

Among the missions they were to carry out was a quest to slay an undead dragon. It was nothing more than one of the quests that existed to build up existence before the war arc. The one who had been prepared for that sake was the subspecies dragon.

The fearsome appearance of its corpse was there to put on a show that it was a fearsome foe.

'This is a dragon fated to be slain. In a few years' time, it will go out and start a rampage, but for now, here it lays...'

The black fog thought over various things with the information it had on hand. It was at that moment. The fog noticed its own mistake and called out to the boar and bird.

'S-self meeting!!!'

'What?'

'I'm not getting any closer to that thing.'

From the distance entrance of the cage, the two of them looked at the dragon

corpse that had taken in the black fog. The fog began explaining the situation to them.

‘This is a dragon fated to be slain! It will be fine for now, but at this rate, it will make its way out in less than a year. There were originally a few years left, but because it took me in, it’s going to start moving ahead of schedule!’

‘...’

‘... That’s your fault.’

‘Exactly, so it’s my (our) responsibility.’

She wasn’t an individual, therefore the responsibility lay with all three of them, declared the black fog. The boar and bird sighed. But if her words were true, then this was a situation they couldn’t leave be. The three beings were originally existences born to return an irregular to his base. Getting in Rudel’s way, lowering his ranking in the wilderness training, and setting Aleist up as the hero over Rudel.

It was all to return the story to its original path. The boar born from the possibility Rudel wouldn’t drop out of the training as he was supposed to in the event.

The bird that came forth when Aleist’s popularity was much lower than it was supposed to be. It was for that sake that its status down magic displayed no effect only against Aleist.

Finally, the black fog had been born to correct Rudel himself, who was dragging in and changing all his surroundings. It had taken over Cattleya and Lilim, those that Rudel admired in order to fold his heart. As a result of the setting approving of Rudel along the way, it went berserk.

On the sole reason of its own existence, the black fog had tried to kill Rudel. While they had each greeted an unfortunate fate, the three of them existed to mediate the story.

‘There’s no helping it... we’ll go tell Rudel about it.’

The boar decided so, and the bird also nodded as it slipped out of the cave. Seeing the two of them off, the black fog spoke.

‘I-If possible, could you keep quiet about my slipup!?’



“Oy, Fritz, did you hear? It seems that rumor going around is true.”

In the academy cafeteria, the second years of the fundamental curriculum were discussing the newly established royal guard. Apparently, the leader of the new unit would be given a dragon, and there were even talks that their duties and jurisdiction would rival the high knights and dragoons, so the students were sure it was a lie.

As the conversation was turned to him, Fritz recalled the letter he received a few weeks prior.

“IS that so? I heard that as long as they have knight qualifications, anyone can participate in the royal guard captain selection process. Is that one also true?”

Fritz pretended not to know, but he already knew all. The sender of his letter was the first princess Aileen, and the letter pertained to the royal guard. But it wasn’t written that he would be selected. All Fritz knew was that he would be able to participate.

“It a new organization of elites we’re talking about here! Why don’t we take a whack at it too?”

Perhaps they would be chosen. Seeing his classmates get worked up as they thought over their prospects, Fritz wasn’t so calm inside. From the events of last year, he couldn’t help but be conscious of Rudel and the others.

“High knights will be there, and active knights as well, right? I think it’ll be considerably difficult.”

Having experienced an overwhelming defeat, Fritz couldn’t understand what he was lacking. He couldn’t understand the fact that he had only ever lived in a narrow world, but even so, he sought out power and wanted to grow stronger.

“Even if I’m no good, there won’t be a problem with you, Fritz! If it’s now, you might even be able to beat Rudel. If it’s Fritz, strongest in our year, I do think you’re worthy to be royal guard captain.”

His classmates’ words they believed from the bottom of their hearts irritated

him. The pseudo magic sword he had obtained through watching Rudel, and the techniques he used freely to strengthen his body, even with all of them Fritz had lost. His classmates who couldn't understand that irritated him. To add onto that, Fritz had lost to Aleist as well.

“Well, it sounds interesting, so I guess I'll try entering.”
(It's Aileen's request, after all.)

After giving that answer, Fritz returned to his meal. Fritz' selection was a determined fact, but oblivious to that, he decided to take the challenge. He even felt thankful to Aileen for giving him the chance.



“M-Millia-san!”

A bouquet in his hand, Aleist was practicing his confession to a wall. Around, his friends he'd been with from his fundamental curriculum years watched over with grins. They were there to make sure no one came, and until Millia-who he's called out-arrived, they critiqued Aleist's practice confessions.

“Aleist, you're trying too hard... you'll be fine as long as you learn to say the word love more naturally. You've got a good face, and she won't say no, I tell you.”

“No, doesn't that make it sound like his face is all he's got? In truth, he's a perfect guy with both status and fame, right?”

His friends watching him, after confirming that the time drew near, they decided to disperse. Tell us how it works out, they said as they left, and seeing them leave, Aleist began to feel hopeless.

“I-it's fine! I'm sure it'll work out... even if it doesn't, I won't give up! I'll try however many...”

While Aleist muttered to convince himself, he heard the footsteps of someone's approach, accelerating his heart. He had called her out to a relatively secluded space, so he concluded the one approaching was Millia. He instantly carried out his confession.

“I-I like you! Please go out with me!!!”

His eyes closed, Aleist handed over the bouquet. But even here he had failed miserably.

“E-eh!? W-well, if you’re fine with me...”

“Eh!?”

The voice wasn’t Millia, so Aleist opened his eyes to confirm it. There stood a young girl with red hair. Her tan skin and red hair standing out, the girl who looked younger than her age let one was not Millia. She was a potential lover interest called Lux.

While she boasted a small body, she was a warrior from birth who wielded a large hammer. The appearance of the first year girl sent Aleist into great confusion. Unluckily, that was where Millia made her entrance.

“Oh? I came because I was called here, but it doesn’t look like Aleist is the one who called for me... Aleist, you should give Seli and Juju some consideration as well.”

Calmly looking over Aleist and Lux, she had noticed Aleist was making a confession. While the essence was mistaken, the situation was correct. Aleist’s friend had summoned Millia there, but the fact he didn’t tell her who was waiting for her had become a problem.

If she knew, perhaps she would have noticed her mistake.

After cautioning Aleist, Millia awkwardly walked off. In the four years since she came to the academy she had grown, and now she was more of a lady than a girl. They were sisters after all, and Millia was coming to resemble her big sister Lilim. Seeing her back as she walked off, Aleist cried.

“Whyyyyyyy!!!”



Around that time, Rudel was speaking with Millia’s older sister Lilim. From Lilim’s point of view, she was just dropping by the person who’d been on her mind lately, but she knew Rudel had looked out for her in the events of two years passed. She was worried whether there were any drawbacks from the actions Rudel had taken to save her.

“You’re going to the dragon dwellings!?”

“Yes. I got permission, so all that’s left is to actualize it.”

As the two spoke of the gossip surrounding the academy, the topic naturally shifted to the newly established royal guard. Lilim knew Rudel had become the white knight, and she had somewhat realized the royal guard was related to that. Her knowledge only served to increase her surprise at Rudel’s actions.

“There is no reason for a human like you to push yourself so. For a demi-human, unless you obtain a wild dragon, you’ll never be recognized, but you have an opportunity to obtain a gray dragon. Yet you’ll make a waste of it?”

While Lilim said harsh words in worry, Rudel answered with a bitter smile.

“I have a few reasons. But my biggest one is because I want to choose my dragon. Though that’s just my own selfishness. It’s not like I hate gray dragons or anything!”

On Rudel’s frantic denial at the end, Lilim gave a chuckle. I know, she said, and told Rudel she wasn’t misunderstanding anything.

For Rudel, he also had a promise with the three. He had no mind to obsess over it, but some part of his heart hurt when he heard he wouldn’t be able to choose his own dragon. To Rudel, Lilim made a certain proposal.

“If your feelings remain unchanged, then do you want me to take you to the dragon dwellings? It’s the homeland of my dragon, and you’re not a person I’m not supposed to take.”

“You will!? I’d definitely like to take you up on that!”

Seeing Rudel delighted that he could ride a dragon, Lilim smiled. But she also did want Rudel to give up. As gray dragons were reared by the country, they didn’t attack humans. Even if you weren’t chosen, they wouldn’t take your life. But wild dragons boasted pride much higher than the gray.

It was quite normal for them to kill humans they hated. While their abilities were high, there was a danger of losing one’s life.

“Very well, then once the time comes, and you still wish to go, let us get in touch.”

Saying that, Lilim parted with Rudel. Since she'd come to the academy anyways, she thought to go meet her little sister Millia. Though she was treated as a bit of an extra to Rudel.



The former goddess, now Sakuya, was living a life parasiting off of Rudel and Izumi. But there was only a year left of their time at the academy, so the time had come to think of her future.

In Rudel's room, Sakuya lay on the bed as she ate sweets. When she didn't have a name, Luecke and Aleist would call her terrible things, so she compromised and chose the name Sakuya. When Aleist called her Flan von Brains and Flan McFlan, there was once a time she wept as she clung onto Rudel.

As a resolution, Rudel thought lining up two flans was no good, so... how about Flan AlaMode? He asked. So as always, the former goddess ended up crying her way to Izumi, and Sakuya was now her name. She was never able to think up any good names for herself, but she decided anything was better than being called Flan.

Izumi thought it was quite a nice name and she couldn't understand what the former goddess didn't like about it. But Sakuya it was, and now Sakuya was surprised at what Rudel declared.

"Study? What are you talking about, Rudel. I'm a goddess!"

"Former, that is... and isn't it about time you thought about going independent? I'm fine with supporting you, but the way things are going, you're going to remain your no-good self."

Playing around all day only to be saved by Izumi or Rudel, Sakuya had no words to return.

"Nnrrghh, fine, got it. I'll make you regret the day you made light of a goddess' intellect, you hear! When it comes to me, the letters that humans use are mere... what's this?"

As Sakuya showed her motivation, Rudel handed over a few books. Those books were the picture books about dragoons Rudel had brought with him. If

only it were a doujin, I would've happily read it... thought Sakuya as she opened one up.

But no matter what page she looked at, she could see traces it had been read over again and again.

“Do you really like dragoons so much? They're just knights who ride dragons. I'm pretty sure the white knight title supersedes them.”

“... Let's just say I could put white knight and dragoon on a scale. I have no doubt I would pick dragoon without any hesitation.”

As Rudel cut it clear, Sakuya uninterestedly looked at the pictures. She didn't know the letters, so she looked at the pictures, and tried reading a story of her own imagination.

A male dragon and male knight cross over the bounds of species and... as she read that tale alone, Rudel hit her on the head relatively seriously. With teary eyes, Sakuya rubbed her head as she glared at Rudel, but he was actually quite angry so she apologized.

“Don't just arbitrarily revise the story! There's no helping it, so I guess I'll have to read them to you each night.”

“You sure look happy when you say that. Men sure seem to love dragons and other strong lifeforms...”

Uninterested as she was, Rudel would read her the dragoon books each night. A few days later, Sakuya burst into Izumi's room, preciously holding a picture book in her hands as she declared,

“Izumi, I'm going to become a dragoon!”

“I-I see... E-EeeeEh!!!?”

Sakuya's eye's sparkled as she adoringly held the book up high, and Izumi had no idea what to say to her.

Chapter 69: The Young Man and the Two

The boar and the bird, their bodies growing considerably smaller along the way, somehow managed to reach the academy.

At first, they both boasted large and imposing forms, yet now not a shadow of that glory remained. They had shrunk to a size that would fit atop the palm of a hand. The two of them waited for night before getting into contact with Rudel. They got the feeling their dignity would diminish even further if they appeared during the day.

Once night came along, they snuck into the boys' dorm. Making sure not to be seen, they made their way to Rudel's room only to find the form of Rudel educating Sakuya.

"Don't let the book on your head fall! That's proof of bad posture. Keep walking like that."

"H-how strict! If you're this harsh on me, I'm going to cry!"

A book balanced on her head, Sakuya shook as she walked. Looking at that, Rudel similarly placed a book on his head to show by example.

"If you end up crying here, you'll never become a dragoon, former goddess!"

"It's Sakuya now! But you have a point. I was mistaken, Rudel! Now let's hurry on to what comes next!"

"That's the spirit."

The two beasts felt almost as if they were watching a skit, stationing themselves before the doors like actors awaiting their parts.

'... How tedious.'

'Really? Looks fun to me.'



When Rudel and Sakuya entered a break, small as they were, the two beasts put up an imposing air as they entered the room. At their forms as they tried their best, Sakuya stifled a laugh. Rudel thought their entrance was related to

getting a dragon, so he hurriedly placed them on his desk to hear them out.

They were somewhat dissatisfied with that treatment, but losing to Rudel's serious expression, they gave the details of what had happened. The fact that they couldn't find a dragon willing to be his mount, and that an undead dragon had taken in their comrade, the black fog. For argument's sake, they were once the same entity, so out of pity, they made it sound like the undead dragon had sealed her.

Right, they had lied. No, to be more precise, the two of them avoided mentioning that the fog had made a mistake, causing Rudel to misunderstand.

"I see, so getting everything together, the black fog has been seized by an undead dragon. And the situation is a dangerous one where it will go on a rampage within a year."

'... That's right.'

'You've got the idea.'

Sensing the dubious air surrounding the two, Sakuya directed a dubious glance at the boar and bird on the desk. At her doubtful eyes, the two of them averted their eyes evasively.

"Aren't you two a bit suspicious? More importantly, I'd appreciate it if you returned my powers as a goddess, you know?"

'Can't. The one who absorbed your powers is the black fog.'

'To go even further, the black fog is also on the verge of losing her powers. It's best you think that you won't be getting them back.'

Pissed at the bird's words, Sakuya hoisted both of them up in an eagle grip. Lifting them and bringing them to her face, she glared with enough intensity to kill.

"What did you just say? What is it you just said, you beasts!?"

'Eek!'

'F-forgive me!'

"Sakuya, put them down already. But that really is a bother. The country's capable of subjugating an undead dragon, but when the target's a dragon, it'll

be perilous even for a knight brigade. I should report the details to the king by letter, and make sure their preparations are perfect...”

In his head, Rudel considered what would happen to the Kingdom of Courtois if an undead dragon ran rampant. It was clear the casualties would be enormous. But this time, they had the information beforehand. If they used it to its fullest, he knew the subjugation would be an easy task.

But on the words from the two, Rudel was troubled to respond.

‘According to the black fog, she wanted to use that dragon corpse and make it Rudel’s dragon, it seems.’

‘Well there’s no helping it in this case, so I’m sure he’ll give up.’

He’d get a dragon of his own. On those words, Rudel erred. Normally, if the country laid out the perfect groundwork, and challenged it with the right measures, its defeat was certain, but Rudel’s desires twisted him.

“... You said there was about a year of deferment.”

‘There’s something more important than that.’

‘Rudel, either supply us with magic or return us to your sword. We’re already disappearing...’

Close to their limits, the two shrunk even further and entered Rudel’s blade as if melting into it. How rejuvenating, and I’m sleepy, they said as they gained a source of mana.



Rudel hurriedly wrote a letter to get in touch with Basyle. It was in order to ask about the blacksmith who purchased the boar’s tusk. According to the boar, his tusk was a material of the highest quality. What’s more, when taking on one of their own, he said it would definitely be useful. As the undead dragon took in the black fog, it would surely have an effect...

Believing the boar’s words, Rudel immediately put them to action. He would ask them for whatever remained of the tusk, and have it made into armor. If it was a smithy that specialized in swords, then he thought he’d leave the armor to another merchant as he hurriedly went into preparations.

He decided not to report the undead dragon to the country. But he did write that an investigation was necessary, and sent in a separate report to the country through his house. And by that, Rudel would be doing the initial investigation himself, he decided.

The timing was just right. He had obtained permission to go to the dragon dwellings, and he could have Lilim take him. Rudel thought it was too good of an opportunity to pass up.

“Looking at the time, it’ll be right before the selection test.”

Scanning the calendar, he confirmed when his preparations would be complete alongside the date of the selection test. Rudel wasn’t quite on board the selection test, but it was an order from the country, and he had no choice but to join in. A few months. That was the time afforded to Rudel. Sakuya watched his serious expression with worry.

“Why do you have to push yourself? Just get the gray dragon! If you try to do the impossible and fall short...”

Izumi will be sad. Before she could say that, Rudel looked at her and tried persuading her.

“It’s just my own selfishness. I don’t want to drag anyone else in. And you see, it’s been decided they’ll send two dragoons. It’ll be fine even if worse comes to worst. No matter what happens, the country will deal with the problem before the dragon starts to move.”

He had lain the groundwork. He had reported the undead dragon matter required investigation from the country. And knowing that fact, the country had decided to send him two dragoons. As Rudel had become the white knight, they were dispatching guards just in case.

But they didn’t put much emphasis into Rudel’s report of the undead dragon. It was taken with doubt. It was for that reason their allowance of Rudel’s arbitrary actions and the country’s own countermeasures were so lax. Even if he reported the truth from the start, they wouldn’t have believed him all the same.

In the worst case, his own death would surely make the country move. Rudel

had been resolved to risk his life to get a dragon from before he could remember. For he was aware there were mountains of knights who died unrecognized by the dragons.

“Sakuya, I have a request. Can you keep this a secret from the others?”

“Eh?”

Rudel tried to persuade, but as he requested her silence, his eyes wouldn't accept any dissent. Unable to resist those eyes, Sakuya quietly nodded. It was at that moment she understood. That Rudel was resolved for death.



As Rudel started to action to obtain a dragon, his movements were swift. In the third term of his fourth year, he heard back from Basyle, identified the smithy, and once he learned they manufactured armor as well, he instantly put in a request. For Lilim as well, he informed her by letter he was aiming to head to the dragon dwellings around the beginning of his fifth year's second term.

He had known it would be dangerous from the start, and there was nothing for him to panic over at this point.

But Sakuya who knew the truth was a different story. Even as she accompanied Rudel's training, she couldn't understand why he'd risk his life to try obtaining a dragon. If he made a compromise, even if he couldn't become a dragoon, he'd still have a dragon in his hands.

And Sakuya didn't like hiding things from Izumi. Lately, she had gotten around to avoiding her.

But when she encountered Izumi in the school cafeteria, they would end up eating together. To the current Sakuya, that was painful.

“When the graduation ceremony's over, do you want to have a party? Ah, right, there's the princess' party. I also got an invitation. A high knight came all the way over to the boys' dorm to deliver it.”

Luecke and Eunius sat at the same table, the five of them eating lunch together. The topic had turned to the fifth year student graduation. Rudel had quite a few acquaintances in the fifth year. The tiger tribe girls, and nesses of the

black cat tribe, he knew a few on a personal level.

“Right, it seems Fina-sama is personally gathering her acquaintances together to hold a party. Getting together those who got along, she wants to see off the graduates.”

As Eunius placed his invitation on the table, Luecke took it and confirmed its contents.

“... It’s the same as the one that came to my place. But aren’t these participants strange? You know these names too, don’t you, Rudel? A majority of them are from the best tribes, and I get the feeling there are very few young nobles here. It also feels almost as if the fact we were invited was just to show those around a certain level of status was necessary.”

As Luecke read into it, Eunius said he was thinking too deeply and laughed it off. As a matter of fact, calling the eldest sons of the Three Lords to silence the nobles who weren’t invited was included in Fina’s plans. The other reason was of course, for Rudel’s participation.

“I do know quite a few fifth years.”

Rudel recalled the faces of his acquaintances and noticed a majority of them were beastpeople. Because of Fina, his social circle had grown skewed, but Rudel was thankful for all the new encounters. Once they graduated, there would surely be some he’d never see again, but Rudel wanted to see them off with a smile.

“I didn’t get an invitation, so I can’t go. The three of you can enjoy yourselves.”

“Aah, it’s that thing where all the good food is lined up, right? But that strange woman will be there, so what should I...”

Izumi didn’t feel any unease letting the three of them go alone. It was a party the princess was holding. Knowing she wouldn’t match, she had given up from the start. But Sakuya didn’t understand that area. She had an interest in the party part of it, but when she knew Fina was the organizer, she mulled over whether to go or not.

“What are you talking about? You can just come with me.”

Rudel voiced Izumi's participation as if it were only natural. Sakuya also told Rudel she wanted to go, and he permitted it under the condition she didn't eat too much.

"Are you sure? Well, it's a party held by a student. Its scope is limited, but..."

Luecke thought a bit over the two's participation, but Eunius sighed that his thoughts were too stiff.

"It's not like it's going to be on the scale of the usual ones, right? The participants are mainly beastmen so just go in your school uniform and have a bit of fun while you're at it."

While the three of them usually fooled around together, Luecke and Eunius often attended parties. Rudel's case, where he had never attended a party before, was far more abnormal. The two accustomed to it weren't nervous. Hearing it was a party Fina was holding, Rudel wasn't the slightest bit nervous either.

Once Sakuya learned she could take part, she began scheming over how she could avoid Fina while eating as much food as possible... but Izumi alone was acting strangely.

"Eh, no, umm... I don't think I'll go. I'll just be a bother."

Losing her composure, she nervously declined the invitation. Rudel wasn't interested if Izumi wasn't going. So...

"Are you worried about the invitation letter? Then wait right there. I'll get you one at once."

He stood right from his seat and walked off towards the girls' dorm. The four of them watched off his back, but in little over ten minutes, he returned with two invitations in hand.



"C-curse you, black haaiiiiiirrr (That woman... using master to extort an invitation from me is downright cowardly!)"

On her bed in vexation... Fina expressionlessly held her knees as she recalled when Rudel had come a little passed noon. When she thought he was stopping

by for the first in quite some time, the reason was Izumi.

She pouted that Izumi would be taking part too. Fina's guard Sophina sighed at her expressionless irritation as she watched over her.

"Isn't it fine? We've already prepared so much, so it shouldn't be a problem if we have a few more on this occasion."

It was a party of beastpeople gathered for Fina's sake, but she had to lay an extensive groundwork to even carry out the preparations. She couldn't let Aileen learn of it, so on the surface, she had made it something to send off the graduates.

"What are you talking about, Sophina? Because of master, the number of nobles saying they want to participate has grown. If you think it's so light, then take some responsibility and help me out."

As if to hoist off the responsibility, Fina handed over a load of letters from her noble upperclassmen. If Rudel and the others were taking part, Fina thought they would show some prudence, but Rudel's actions had twisted that notion. If commoners can join in, then shouldn't we be able to? Or so it was thought.

"Eh? No, even if you give me so many letters..."

"You're a high knight, so take some responsibility in your own remarks. (Ah, I think I've stopped caring. Let's just push it onto Sophina. Hah, I won't be able to fluff up the tiger girls or Ness, will I. How lonely... huh? Wait a tick. I'm a princess, aren't I? Isn't this the time for me to use my authority?)"

Hit with so much extra work, Sophina later went to consult with the academy side. Now with free time on her hands, Fina began to move things behind the scenes.



Over the next few days, it became clear that the numbers hoping to take part were far greater than expected, so that year, the academy decided to officially sponsor the graduate-centric party. When it came to graduates, there were those that finished schooling in their second and third years as well. Their numbers were nothing to make light of.

“If it’s come to this, what are we supposed to do?”

At the details of the party posted up on the boys’ dorm bulletin, Euius tried asking the usual members. Rudel and the others were enrolled, and it wasn’t as if they were graduating.

“It seems they’re taking volunteers to help out with construction.”

Luecke confirmed the contents, amazed that the scale had more than doubled from the start. The academy had never held a graduate party before, but Fina’s arbitrary actions had moved their hand. The academy was likely abiding the princess’ orders.

Unaware of the party until that point, Aleist recalled how he’d seen these happenings in the game. It was originally a party Fina held for the protagonist. Recalling how it was supposed to be the final event of the school chapter, he noticed it was happening a year early, but at this point, Aleist didn’t even question it.

“For enrolled students, as long as you help out with the constructions, preparations, or cleanup, you can attend, it seems.”

On Aleist’s words, Rudel instantly volunteered.

“I see, then I’ll help out. Do I just have to fill this out?”

Rudel wrote his name on the paper stuck to the board. Seeing that, Sakuya said she would join as well and wrote her name. They were misshapen letters, but she proudly showed them to everyone gathered.

But while Rudel pat her head, everyone else’s reaction was cold.

“Sakuya? Oy, oy, isn’t your name supposed to be Flan, former goddess?”

As Aleist emphasized the former goddess part, Sakuya sent a dirty look. In regards to that, Luecke opened his mouth as well.

“Flan AlaMode, wasn’t it?”

As Luecke asked considerably seriously, Euius burst into laughter. Looking over everyone’s response with teary eyes, the goddess proceeded to plunder everyone’s dessert in the following meal.

Chapter 70: The Young Man and the Party

‘Well then, to all our graduates’ futures, cheeeeerrrrsss!!’

The party Fina had thought up to bless the departure of the graduates had reached a scale beyond all expectations. In the hall, the master of ceremonies selected from the enrolled student body called for a chant of cheers.

The scale had grown too large, and in the end, it settled down as an academy-sponsored event. All the graduates took part, while the enrolled students in their third and fourth years did the construction and preparations, and the first and second-year students staffed the hall on the day in question.

Everyone took part in their school uniform, and only the students of the fundamental curriculum distributing food and drink had their outer coats removed. Rudel and the others stood before all the food prepared by the girls’ and boys’ dorm dining halls working alongside the school cafeteria.

“This is quite something. I never thought we’d get to experience something like this in our school years.”

Having finished his greetings to the graduates and third years, Luecke met up with Rudel and Izumi. As long as you helped set up, then you could take part in the festivities, so Rudel delightfully helped out. Dragged along by him were Luecke and Eunius, and when they entered the hall with setup underway, it was quite a surprise to the students who lived in noble society.

The other noble students were no slackers either, their preparations favorably proceeding to bring them here.

“Finished your pleasantries, Luecke?”

Rudel looked after Sakuya with Izumi as he gazed over the hall. The nobles would at most watch him from afar; the only ones who came to greet him were his classmates from the fundamental curriculum and the fifth year beast people. He had finished giving his greetings to his acquaintances and the only one left was Fina, but there were plenty of students who wanted to speak with Fina, so he had to wait his turn.

“Yeah, I’ve already spoken with most. I also called out to some promising talents. Let me tell you, we’ve gotten six shield knights on our hands this year, so my plans are going as expected.”

Sakuya couldn’t understand what Luecke was saying, but what she could understand was that the food before her eyes was delicious. Ignoring Luecke’s statement, she reached out her hand.

Izumi recalled Luecke’s program. He said he would give shield knights a whole new value, and forcefully took Vargas into the Halbades House the year before. Recalling how he had quarreled with Eunius, I hope nothing bad comes of it... she thought just as Eunius approached with a displeased look on his face.

“Oy! Continuing on from last year, you’ve done it again, damn beansprout! When you already dragged off Vargas last year, what’s the meaning of you making off with all the valuable folks this year too!?”

In regards to Eunius’ yell, Luecke thought to return the favor for all the times he had been teased over Lena, returning a smile of leisure. He was in quite a good mood, and his smile contrasted well with Eunius’ irritation.

“Hmm, Eunius, I did no more than offer them a place to perform to their best. I’ll have you stop with these strange allegations. And also, you’re saying the same things as you did last year. Why don’t you try learning a different approach?”

Within that domineering air, Rudel reminisced over Vargas, while Sakuya relished in the food. Izumi alone was left to mediate. Those around only watched-at a fair distance-as Izumi stepped in.

“Both of you, today is a day of celebrations. Can’t you get along a bit more?”

In regards to Izumi’s troubled face, Eunius was displeased, while Luecke declared with a smile.

“Impossible!”

“That’s not happening.”

Seeing them declare it in unison, Rudel also opened his mouth.

“Those two get along quite well, don’t they.”

Seeing Luecke and Eunius grow irritated to refute Rudel's words, Izumi understood they were fine as they were. She warmly watched over their desperate looks as they tried to explain to Rudel just how badly they thought of one another. It was just at that time where, in a place separated from their refreshing discussion, an incident broke out.

"KYAAAAAH!!"

"I-I'm sorry!!"

The voices of Aleist and a female student echoed through the hall.



"W-what do you think you're doing!?"

The girl draped over a fallen Aleist was a student with blue hair extending to her shoulders. Her skin was pale, her lack of outer coat identified her as an underclassman, and just as she was carrying drinks around, she had bumped into Aleist. By the way, the KYAAAAAH came from Aleist.

For some reason, after colliding, she ended up slipping and sliding, her face ending up buried in Aleist's nether regions. In exchange, the girl's lower half was right before Aleist's eyes... as his face turned red, a few of his friends ran over to save him.

"What are you doing, Aleist!? What about the plan!?"

"We finally managed to pull Seli, Juju, Yunia and Lux away for you man!"

"This was the big chance..."

"I really do apologize! I'm sorry!"

As he apologized to his complaining friend, the fallen girl apologized to Aleist. But the two of them were in terrible shape. As his friends tried to pull him from under her, the girl ended up dragged along. As ill fate would have it, that was the only scene Millia happened to witness.

Millia's expression was stiff as she looked at Aleist. The two of them exchanged a look when the girl ended up pulling too hard on Aleist's trousers, removing them entirely. Aleist and his friends who had planned to use the party for a confession were now convinced they had failed.

“The worst.”

“Y-you’re wrong! This isn’t what it looks like, Milliaaaa!!”

“Don’t drop the honorific!”

As Millia left the chaotic scene, Aleist froze with his hand held out towards her. The blue haired girl was Nate, a romance target character.



Watching Aleist’s comedy from a distance, Fina burst into laughter with in. Her abs were twitching at a minute level no one could notice. Ever since she heard that Aleist had spent every day training with the tiger tribe last year, she had experienced a jealousy close to malice.

“Oh my, Aleist-dono sure has it hard... (Fwah! He’s sure done it, the bastard! How do you like them apples?)”

At present, Fina had finished speaking with roughly all the young nobles. She was speaking with the beast people as she wished. The talks were especially focused around the tiger tribe. While in her heart she wanted to spend every day trained up by fluffies as well, she was carrying out a serious conversation.

Using the importance of mingling with demihuman tribes as the official reason, Fina was fluffing them up. Seeing Ness who seemed to want to go to Rudel, and the tiger tribe girls fidget as they looked at him, she felt a mild arousal.

Seeing the unusual innocent side of those tiger women, the tiger tribe men were convinced. That they could do something about the strong-willed women who would always get the tribe’s men under their feet...

“Boss, Rudel-san really is a master!”

“Just look, they’ve all regained their cuteness!”

“Yeah, now listen up you lot, we’re definitely polishing up that skill!”

Fina called out to the overly enthusiastic tiger boys, but it wasn’t as if she was only speaking to the tiger tribe. Demihumans faced discrimination in Courtois. Their positions in the country were weak, and once they graduated the academy, they would instantly be sent off to borderland or some danger zone

rife with skirmishes.

Having caught sight of that, Fina had begun making preparations for the future... Deceiving the eyes of the country's upper brass who saw them as no more than a consumable commodity, her plans were gradually advancing.

Behind the needlessly talented Fina, Sophina looked on with a sigh. She had been informed of and had helped with the plan, but she had some dissatisfaction that Fina wasn't using her competence for the country. It was simply that no one could stop Fina as she burst forth towards her own desires.

"Even after you graduate, I'll definitely never forget you (Even if you graduate, I'll never let any of my fluffies get away, so you better prepare yourselves!!)"



The party ended, and the graduates prepared to leave the dorm. The rooms they left behind would eventually be occupied by new students coming in.

To Rudel and co, they were now entering their final year. From Rudel's point of view, it was a critical point that would determine if he became a dragoon or not, and to Izumi, this year held her only chance of becoming a high knight. There were a number patterns one could take to join the high knights. Those who distinguished themselves as knights, those with good grades at the academy... Izumi was aiming to be selected for her grades.

To Izumi who was born in a foreign land, once she graduated, her prospects would distance themselves all at once.

Luecke and Eunius went into preparations to return home and succeed their houses. As a formality, they would swear allegiance to the country, but the two of them came from archduke lines boasting vast expanses of land. Once they graduated, they would have no freedom.

But here, there was one who did earnestly worry for his future. It was Aleist...

Normally, as the eldest son of a Count House, he was supposed to return home and work on managing his territory. But at present, Aleist held a position called black knight, one overly difficult to do anything about.

It wasn't that Aleist himself had a say in his life's course, yet those who did

have a say had yet to decide on it either. Unlike Rudel's case, the upstart Hardie House was unable to carelessly open its mouth.

When he thought he was trying his best, he was still being washed away by the flow. He decided to meet with Rudel early in the morning. Even if he consulted with his close friends, he couldn't find an answer. While they were worried about him, the talks would only end with him reaffirming the fact he couldn't go against the country's orders.

In the courtyard of the boys' dorm, gazing at the sight of sweltering men doing their morning training at such an early hour, the two of them conversed. Aleist sat on a rock while Rudel practiced swinging his sword.

"So you don't know what you're supposed to do?"

"Y-yeah... it doesn't look like I'll be able to decide my own path, you see. In this situation, I was just wondering what you... what Rudel would do."

While Aleist was worried, it was quite a strange feeling to consult with Rudel, his goal that he wanted to surpass. What's more, Rudel was a human unfit for such consultations.

"Even if I were in your position, I'd aim to be a dragoon."

"No, I don't particularly want to become a dragoon or anything!"

"I know. I'm aware you don't have any intent to become one. But no matter what standing I found myself in, I'd aim to be a dragoon. I'd follow my dreams."

Stopping his swinging and wiping his sweat, Rudel looked into the distance. As if to tell himself, he muttered to the sky.

"It's all I have. It's my everything... so I'll even risk my life on it."

Hearing that voice filled with resolve, Aleist no longer knew what he was supposed to say. Aleist had been earnest from the start, but he got the feeling he had seen something close to madness in Rudel's seriousness.

"I'm sorry. It doesn't look like I'll be able to give any good advice. But if I have to say something, I think dating five people at once is a bit much."

Looking down once more, Rudel looked at Aleist with a troubled look on his face as he started swinging his sword again. Aleist refuted Rudel's last words

with a jump and a scream.

“As I was saying! That’s wrong, I tell you! The one I have a thing for isn’t any one of those five!”

“... Aleist, so you plan to get more? Even the ever-kind Izumi was irritated at your actions. A man’s resourcefulness may be important, but why don’t you learn to value those five a bit more? Not that a stranger like me has any right to say anything on the matter.”

“No, you’re completely relevant! And wait, from my point of view, you’re my rival in love!”

“Y-you... you’re after Izumi!? Then it’s even more unforgivable! If you want to date her, then at the very least do something about your relationship with the other five! Do anything to make her sad and I’ll make dragon feed of you!”

As Rudel suddenly emitted his wrath, before they had noticed it, the men in the yard had dispersed. Aleist explained it was a misunderstanding with teary eyes. But Rudel was calm, as if nothing had happened at all.

“Um, I meant that as a joke, but... am I no good at comedy?”

“You don’t see me laughing.”

Rudel knew the one Aleist liked from the start. They had spoken about it before, but Aleist was confused by Rudel’s sudden outburst.

“Whatever the case, if you want to envision your future, you better keep those five, no, six in your field of vision.”

As Rudel corrected it to six, Aleist let out a sigh. He likely meant Milla as the sixth one, but at present, the party’s events had invited in her hatred. Even when Aleist was the one pushed down... Aleist felt it was all quite a bit unreasonable.



Once the new school term came along, the item Rudel requested came in. The armor he ordered from the eastern blacksmith was delivered. With real combat in mind, it was an armor with barely any ornamentation.

It was prepared in accordance to a fight with an undead dragon, but right

now, Rudel was the white knight. He likely wouldn't be taken out in an instant, but if you asked whether he could win or not, the answer was no.

The gap in power between man and dragon was a great one. As Rudel had never fought one before, he was treading into unknown territory. He had researched through books, but if a single person would ever triumph over a dragon, then it would be accurate to call them a true hero.

The armor that used what remained of the boar's tusk let off a mysterious glimmer.

As he looked at the armor in his room at the dorm, the voices called out to him. The voices of the boar and bird in his sword.

'That's quite some armor you have there.'

'Sure enough... but are you really challenging it alone?'

Rudel left a bit of silence before answering.

"Yeah, I've lived for this moment."

Outside the room's door, Sakuya overheard Rudel's conversation with the two. While she was only able to listen in silence, she felt something off in her left hand. She looked at her left hand to find it was shaking.

Chapter 71: The Young Man and Time

Having entered his final year, while there were various problems, Rudel and the others had safely moved up. General consensus stated the eldest sons of the three lords were most worthy of being the boys' dorm prefects, and the academy half-strong-armed them into the position.

Izumi had become a prefect of the girls' dorm, and the academy was taking the measures they thought best. With a foreigner as prefect, the freshmen nobles did try to rebel, but the academy wasn't lenient with them.

Make Izumi prefect! This was an earnest plea from the teachers and all relevant personnel. In the four years since she enrolled, in the fifth year where it was said held the greatest gathering of problem children, Izumi's presence was an immense one. On top of the fact the problem child known as Rudel would never go against her, there were few in the world the men of the tiger tribe would lower their heads to.

From Izumi's point of view, why did it come to this? She surely thought. But those around had determined Izumi was all they had.

While Izumi had grown busy with the prefect duties imposed on her, she was currently teaching Sakuya letters in her room. She still couldn't bring herself to believe the goddess part and so forth, but she thought of her as a handful of a sister as she looked after. But lately, Sakuya had definitely been acting strange. She had once declared with confidence that she would become a dragoon, but now there were times her health took a hit, and her concentration wasn't there.

Thinking it was an illness, Izumi had the infirmary check on her, but there were no abnormalities. Sakuya was also mindful of her recent poor condition, but she was certain it was just temporary. No, she was making sure not to think about it. Ever since the day her hands began to shake, she had begun to experience dizzy spells.

"Are you alright, Sakuya? Should we end things here today?"

Her studies going nowhere and her body in bad state, only her irritation was

building up, so Izumi called over in a gentle voice. But Sakuya studied on as if clinging to her book.

“I-I can go on...”

The form of Sakuya’s frantic studies was starting to show a different sort of impatience from Rudel’s.



With the start of a new school year, the upperclassmen found themselves looking after their juniors more often. In the dorm, they would teach everything from the general rules to the unwritten ones. But as was the case every year, the young nobles of high status would mock their upperclassmen and fail to listen to anything they had to say. They were using the boys’ dorm dining hall to give their explanations, but the young nobles had started talking in the background.

The upperclassmen giving the lecture usually wouldn’t caution underclassmen of higher status, but lately, with Chlust, Fritz, and a stream of all sorts of scandals going on, they cautioned them anyways. There, the upperclassmen boys recalled the trump card the graduates had thought up.

“Is everyone listening? I’ll only say it once, so you’d better remember. There are four people considered the strongest of this academy, and you definitely can’t go against those four. Does anyone know who they are?”

To the fifth year giving the presentation on the form, a noble first year gave an exemplary answer.

“There’s the second princess, right? And isn’t it strange for there to be four when it’s supposed to be **strongest**? Are you making fun of us, senpai?”

On that one student’s remark, the first years around him raised similar voices of laughter. But without paying it any mind, the upperclassman continued his explanation.

“You can take it that way if you want, but the four I’m talking about are the eldest sons of the Arses, Diade, Halbades, and Hardie Houses. They’re nobles, and their statuses exceed all of yours. There was once a time where one of them insta-killed a first-year, but as long as you don’t lay hands on those four,

you'll be fine. However... there is a single person those four can't go up against. Besides the princess."

As the faces of the students who mocked them went stiff, they utilized the same threat last year's graduates had used. When there were problem children and a princess in the girls' dorm, they thought of their seniors who had done their best, as one of the prefects-a fifth-year boy-continued on with a smile.

"There's a fifth year girl called Izumi-san, a prefect in the girls' dorm. No matter what happens, you can't go against her... the academy's strongest won't stay silent."

"A-and what of it? From her name, she must be a foreigner, right? Even if you threaten us..."

"Ah, sorry, sorry. Can you not comprehend? Let me rephrased that: if the eldest sons of the Three Lords can't go against her, then there's no way the likes of you could. And if you sneak into the girls' dorm, you really will be cut down, so be careful. The princess is there right now, so they're security's on full alert, and there are high knights waiting with sword in hand."

As the fifth year gave a disinterested explanation, the prideful attitudes of the students who had only just come from their houses didn't crumble. There were some who would keep quiet once they learned their own ability, but there would always be students who used their house's status to think they could take on a high and mighty attitude, even in the academy.

But there as the prefects gave an explanation to the upperclassmen, Rudel and the others made their appearance. Rudel, Eunius and Luecke never wanted to become prefects to begin with, but with the academy's strong insistence and-for Rudel-Izumi's persuasion, they reluctantly accepted.

The teachers were begging them to set an example for the underclassmen, so they ended up giving a late appearance. The dorm dining hall went silent at once. Thinking of how the country's future authorities were assembled, the young nobles went meek as lambs. The commoner students were also swallowed in by the atmosphere.

As they came to the dining hall, the three of them introduced themselves to the freshmen. But Eunius was sullen that his play time would decrease having

become a prefect. He had visited the town night after night, and just as he became a fifth-year and he thought his free time would increase, he was put to prefect work, so perhaps it was only natural.

“Let me just say it now. Don’t get in my way, don’t cause me trouble, listen to what I have to say... got it?”

His build was large to begin with, and at his words filled with intensity, the first years nodded. The child in his face had gone, and from the eyes of someone who didn’t know him, Eunius looked like a dangerous individual. Luecke’s explanation came next.

“I don’t give a damn about Eunius, but I have to say the same. I want to read in peace and quiet at night... make a stupid ruckus and I’ll shove you in the disciplinary room, so you’d better remember that.”

Luecke let off a cold atmosphere different from Eunius, causing the students’ expressions to gradually darken. But Rudel’s words cheered them up just a bit.

“You’re terrible, the two of you. Can’t you close an eye to the smaller stuff? I also caused some trouble so can’t we be a bit lenient.”

A kind senior. The freshmen were relieved, but his next words made them think he was the scariest of them all.

“But if you cause any trouble at the girls’ dorm, I’ll be troubled... you better prepare yourself when that happens.”

As Rudel’s face took a sudden turn from smile to expressionless, the first years cringed. They had been taught to start with a slight threat, so they had threatened with some light sentiment. But the imposing air they let off, different from that of a normal senior, caused all to give up on resistance.

Having entered their final year, Rudel was twenty. His body had grown, and he let off a more grown-up air. Before the first years who were still young, Rudel recalled when he had first enrolled himself. When he came to the academy, he had never even imagined he would become a prefect.

On Rudel’s threat, Luecke let out a sigh. While Luecke gave off a cold impression, he had become much more sociable than when he first enrolled.

“Rudel, by that you mean don’t cause Izumi any trouble, right?”

Like Luecke, Eunius was also making a bit of a fed-up face.



Unlike the boys’ dorm, the girls’ dorm had Izumi give a smooth explanation. At first, people gave her odd looks as a foreigner, but her explanation proceeded quite favorably.

The reason was simple. They felt it was disadvantageous to go against a woman who accompanied the eldest sons of the Three Lords.

The commoner students were actually quite supportive of Izumi becoming prefect. That commoners could be recognized too, it let them have hope. In contrast, there was displeasure to be had from the nobles.

They thought she had become Rudel’s woman, and popular as he was, that was a spot no one else could reach for with much success. They recognized her as being in the way, but a troublesome existence they couldn’t quite get rid of.

“That’s about all there is to say about the back and dining hall times... if you have any questions, I’ll do my best to answer.”

Having become an adult, Izumi held a calming air, and her original dignified standing form caused a portion of the girls to look up to her. Her long black hair almost seemed to sparkle to the freshmen.

In that dining hall, a single student raised her hand. A first year who gave off a simple feel, and as she sat among the space solidified with commoner girls, her status couldn’t be too high. But what she asked was something quite exorbitant.

“How can I become like you, senpai?”

The eyes of the girl who admired Izumi were sparkling. Izumi had received a number of similar questions before. But she couldn’t understand what ‘like her’ was supposed to mean. And right now, the time and place were off.

“If possible, I must ask you keep the questions to ones related to the presentation.”

The girl hung her head at Izumi’s words. But Izumi followed through.

“... But you’ve come to the academy. You need only polish yourself as you learn. Even if you can’t become like me, I’m sure you’ll find your own ideal.”

While those eyes of aspiration only increased in numbers, Izumi continued explaining the dorm’s rule. But when the explanations turned to the unwritten rule, her face turned a little tired. A number of the prefects were also troubled by these implicit regulations.

“And this one isn’t an official rule, but... if you see a certain boy in the girls’ dorm, run to your room at once, and don’t let him in by any means.”

“But boys can’t enter the girls’ dorm, right?”

A first year seemed perplexed that she had to explain such an obvious thing. In truth, Izumi had already finished telling them not to invite boys into the girls’ dorm.

“No, um...”

Seeing their upperclassmen prefects grasping for words, the first years grew anxious. They watched in silence as the prefects-Izumi included-gathered and whispered amongst themselves. As girls, they had been warned by their houses to be wary of boys at the academy. The insides of their heads were filled with terrible possibilities.

But according to their upperclassmen, it was something completely different.

“... A certain boy can enter the girls’ dorm with barely any question. It’s a troubling thing, but he does have his reasons and his status, so it’s impossible to drive him off. There’s no risk of being assaulted, but... sorry. If you see him, I recommend you run away. You definitely can’t approach! ... He’ll pet you.”

Seeing the first years’ incomprehensive faces, Izumi wanted to grow angry at Rudel in her heart. If they hadn’t actually seen Rudel’s that in action, no one would have realized the true danger.

Until Izumi warned them, the victims had mostly been beastpeople. That is dangerous! It was the unwritten rule of the girls’ dorm. The students who let themselves get pet out of curiosity were left with bodies that could never forget.

Seeing the freshmens' doubtful faces, the prefects cursed Rudel within.



After Rudel left the boys' dorm, Sakuya took out Rudel's sword. Her objective was the two sleeping within the blade. She wondered if they knew anything about the abnormalities occurring in her body, and decided to ask.

In Rudel's room, she placed the sword atop the bed and called them out.

"Can you hear me? There's a little something I want to ask."

'What?'

'...'

"My body's been acting up lately, and when I got a checkup, there was nothing wrong with me. Couldn't this be your comrade's fault? I'd really like to get better soon, you know."

Her recent poor health gradually building up her panic, Sakuya hid her weakness and put up a strong front as she asked.

'Who knows?'

'Well whatever. Try touching the sword's hilt or so. We might find something out.'

Abiding the bird's words, Sakuya gripped the sword's hilt. She felt a light tremor as something raced all over her body. Sakuya parted from the hilt in surprise, sending the two beasts a complaint.

"W-what did you do all of a sudden!?"

'... This is...'

'Quite something.'

Ignoring Sakuya's anger, the two began discussing. Sakuya couldn't understand the contents, but from the atmosphere, she got the feeling it was something bad. Their words gradually grew scarce, causing her tension to grow.

'Listen well... your body is a temporary vessel the black fog created. It was made only for a single battle with Rudel, a disposable body made with only a single use in mind, so to speak.'

A bold sweat flowed down Sakuya's back. Her eyes opened wide and words would no longer come from her mouth. Continuing on, the bird gave a simple explanation of Sakuya's state.

'You did well holding together so long, but your body can no longer maintain itself. What was originally the soul of a goddess was forcefully sealed into a human body. It looks like it's reaching its limit.'

"Y-you're lying, right?"

Her body beginning to quiver, Sakuya suddenly grew scared. It was something she had never before experienced as a goddess, but her body and heart were well attuned to react to the fear known as death.

'It's true. Your body is reaching its limit.'

'... It's something we did, but I can't take responsibility. My apologies.'

The two voices of pity resounded through Rudel's room. Sakuya didn't want to give up, she told the two all she could say.

"If that fog is the one who made my body, can't you do something about it!? Hey, that's right! In that case, if we ask the fog..."

'Sorry. Your own powers were used to create your body. On top of not having any substitute...'

While the boar couldn't bring himself to go on, the bird conveyed the facts.

'Your soul was forcefully sealed in. Your soul will not return to being a goddess. Right now, you are a distorted existence who maintains a human form with a goddess' soul. Once your body reaches its limit, you will disappear.'

The bird hammered in the truth, but his intent was to tell Sakuya to spend her remaining time without regret.

"U-uwah.... Waaaaah!!"

Sakuya's scream resounded through Rudel's empty room. As fear and sadness assailed her, Sakuya came to understand what it meant to part, something she had never felt as a goddess. She recalled Aleist and Rudel who she had met at the temple. And everyone she met at the academy.

“Why? I finally made some friends... I even found a goal! What’s this, what do you mean I don’t have any time!!?”

The bird and boar quietly watched over her maddened form.

“I made a promise! To Rudel and to Izumi! I promised them I would become a dragoon!”

Her form as she wept like a small child was painful to watch. The two beasts purposely forsook her with cold tones. Hate us if you will, despise us if you will... what foolish existences we must be... the two of them thought as they devoted themselves to playing the villain.

‘Crying like a kid is fine and all, but why don’t you think about how to spend what little remains of your life?’

‘I can’t understand it. When you were originally an existence that transcended humanity...’

The three monster who had only been born to put Aleist on the pedestal, they had grown to feel the scorn of the world that created them. They hated themselves for only being able to complete their objectives by bringing misfortune to another.

But the boar and bird had lost their bodies and had become existences only kept alive by Rudel’s mana. They would eventually disappear, but they kept quiet on it. They quietly endured as Sakuya pounded her balled hands against the sword’s sheath.

Chapter 72: The Flan’s Return

As the school entered its first term, Sakuya had lost her vigor like an empty husk. Worried, Rudel and the others tried to look after her, but after a while, she showed her energy again.

But for those around, it was a painfully empty show. She did endeavor through her training to become a dragoon, but Sakuya was too anxious to get anywhere with it. Alongside her fear of death, she was saddened by the notion she would be forgotten forever. While she basked in her sadness, she came to notice her own feelings...



‘Help out?’

Pulling out Rudel’s sword, Sakuya struck up a conversation with the two again. This time, she requested to borrow their power. As the boar let out an incomprehensive voice, she gave a cheery response.

“That’s right! I’m going to disappear just like that, right? In that case, I have to repay my debt to everyone.”

At the request of a slightly withered girl, the two who had one forsaken her decided to undertake. The bird thought it would put her mind at ease, and gave a simple query.

‘So what do you want us to do?’

“First off...”



When the weather was nice, it was possible to eat one’s lunch in the courtyard visible from the school cafeteria. There around noon, Sakuya spoke with Luecke, surrounded by young nobles. She was normally with Rudel, so it wasn’t a problem, but his followers didn’t seem to approve of Sakuya alone talking to him so easily.

Even if the nobles were mindful of her, Sakuya conveyed her business. After

she had done that, Luecke finished up his meal and sipped his drink, responding without the slightest change of expression.

“Is there anything I want you to do for me? The answer is no.”

“A-anything!?”

Luecke’s head was hurting at this peculiar request. When he thought she had regained her vigor, she suddenly came out with such a thing. Thinking it was Rudel’s influence, he looked at Sakuya, who had taken on a posture as if she were praying as she awaited his response.

“Come back later. I don’t have any particular requests. No, wait, I borrowed Rudel’s report. Just return it to him, and that’s that.”

What was handed over was Rudel’s report on magic, and a paper that detailed Luecke’s thoughts on it. As it wasn’t the sort of request she was hoping for, Sakuya’s face turned sour.

Luecke looked at her dissatisfied face and gave his stern opinion.

“If you want a more decent request, you’ll need to earn your opponent’s trust.”

Recalling her usual conduct, Sakuya’s shoulders fell as she tried to make off with the report. But Luecke called her back and handed over his lunch desert. In a small ceramic cup lay a cake covered in cream.

“What’s this?”

“Your wages. It isn’t a bad reward for the job.”

Seeing the exchange of the two, Luecke’s followers felt a kindness they had never seen before in his actions. As he usually ate with Rudel, his followers who only ate lunch with him on occasion were shocked beyond belief.

“... Thank... you.”

Realizing she wasn’t used to saying the words, Sakuya grew ashamed of herself as she left the area.



After handing the report to Rudel, she next headed to Eunius as he shed his

sweat on the training grounds. The students who let their sweat flow, rather than refreshing, it was sweltering. Perhaps because a majority of those on the training grounds were men.

“Any requests? None.”

Attaching a weight to his sword and swinging it around, Eunius was training himself up for his confrontation with Rudel in the second semester. Without even looking at Sakuya’s face, he concentrated on the swing of his sword.

“Anything will do!”

As Sakuya pleaded in a loud voice, Eunius sighed and decided to take a break. Sitting on a bench, he used the towel and drink his followers had prepared to rest.

“I really don’t have... ah, there’s one thing you could do!”

“Oh, what’s that!!?”

Eunius was hit by inspiration, and Sakuya’s eyes sparkled as she bit on. She bit on... but Eunius’ request was quite the iffy one.

“There’s a girl I’m gunning for in one of the shops I frequent, and I’d like to know her preferences. Normally, I’d be able to research, but she’s the silent type, see... I was just mulling over what to do, so could you look into it?”

As Eunius delightfully spoke of the shop’s location and the woman’s characteristics, Sakuya was mildly taken aback.

“Y-yes... very well.”

Thinking she could try asking the bird, Sakuya was about to walk off, when Eunius tossed over the sack of baked sweets his followers had brought over.

“Don’t eat too much.”

After seeing her off with a smile, Eunius restarted his practice swings. Sakuya gripped the sack in her hands and lowered her head.

“Thank you!”

Eunius thought he felt sarcasm in Sakuya’s thanks, and let them slide.



Sending the bird out to investigate, Sakuya held a strategy meeting with the boar. When the bird who manifested in his small body was told to look into the woman Eunius had his eyes on, he spilled some complaints as he flew off... none of the requests were what she had expected, and Sakuya was worried.

“These are just errands, right? I don’t want to sound picky, but aren’t there any better requests out there...”

‘You sure are a picky one. Well, if they’re asked so suddenly, then anyone would be troubled.’

“Then what am I supposed to do!? I don’t want to meet my end as someone who just ran errands!”

‘You should blame your normal conduct.’

She glared at the cold boar, but soon fell onto the bed as she thought over what came next.

“Next is... maybe that guy... but that guy’s...”

The one Sakuya shied from was Aleist, who was on his way to becoming her natural enemy. Continually calling her flan and making fun of her, Aleist was irritating. But the one who appeared to her when she was lonely was also Aleist. She thought back to when she was a goddess, always waiting for humans in that desolate temple.

As she recalled that, she concluded she hated him but she had to go anyways, leaving the bed to search for Aleist.



“Hah? There’s no way I have any requests for you. My problems aren’t the sort of things you would be able to solve.”

Evening had come, and before Aleist-who sat on a bench with a tired look on his face-Sakuya clenched her fist and glared. He was that sort of guy. But she remembered him coming when she was alone.

“T-then I could at least hear you out. They say talking takes a weight off your chest.”

“It’s something quite important to me, but... well, whatever. The truth is, ever

since that party, Millia's come to hate me. Even if I try to approach her, she avoids me, so I can't clear up the misunderstanding."

A little fed-up within, Sakuya's motivation flared as she finally heard what seemed to be request-like enough. But it was a fact that Aleist was often approached by five different underclassmen. Looked at from the side, he had a harem. Sakuya got the feeling it wasn't completely a misunderstanding.

"Leave it to me! I just have to make a chance for you to apologize to Millia, right!"

Sakuya happily sprinted off, meeting up with the bird who had finished investigating Eunius request and bringing the boar out to find Millia.

The campus was growing dark, so she hurriedly sought her out. It was there that the bird spotted her leaving the library, swiftly taking action to secure her. Putting Millia on the boar's back, they all hurriedly raced to deliver her to Aleist.

"W-what's going onnn!! I can't move my body, and a strange boar came out!"

The bird had paralyzed her body with his eyes, and the boar had suddenly appeared to take her off. Millia had valued her usual calm air quite a bit, but with these sudden developments, she could only panic.

Seeing the boar that brought Millia over, Aleist couldn't understand the situation either. But as Sakuya rushed to him, she cried out.

"Now's your chance, Aleist! Correct that misunderstanding!"

Sakuya ran up to Aleist from behind, and with her momentum, she gave him a push. Hurry it up you wimp! Is what she thought as she thrust at him... but she ended up thrusting him towards Millia who had been freed from the bird's eyes and dismounted the boar's back.

As a resulted, it ended up as Aleist pushing Millia down. Having pushed down his crush, the inside of Aleist's head when white with tension and excitement. He forgot his original intent of resolving the misunderstanding, instead confessing in a loud voice.

"M-Millia-san! I like you, I've fallen in love with you! Please go out with me!!"

"What are you saying, Aleist!? Take a good look around!!"

Pushed down, Millia had only just been released from the magic eyes, and her body's movements were still dull. She couldn't run away from Aleist, but she could still look around and understand the situation. When evening came at the academy, the sidewalks would crowd up. Just as Millia had left the library, there were many students who would return to their dorms.

And what would happen if one did something so conspicuous when so many people were around...

A crowd of onlookers had amassed to observe the two.

"E-eeeeeeh!!? Wait, this is... Oy, Flan Head!"

Sakuya had no idea what to do, and the bird and boar had already dispersed. Standing stock still, Sakuya burst into tears. This wasn't how it was supposed to be, she thought, as she cried in apology.

"I'm sorry..."

"That's fine and all! But what are you going to do about this situa... Eek!!"

Before the confused forms of Aleist and Millia came Izumi as if to protect Sakuya. She was on her way back to the dorm when she noticed the ruckus. Peering in, she had found Sakuya apologizing in tears. Incidentally, Aleist had pushed Millia down... while it was a situation where it was troubling to make any conclusions, she couldn't just leave a crying Sakuya behind, so she came out.

Be that as it may, she did have a few things she wanted to say to Aleist, who pushed down a woman in the twilight and made another one cry. The look in her eyes grew sharp, and as Aleist was looked down upon, the setting sun made him feel fear at Izumi's face.

"I don't understand the situation, but first off, why don't you two stand up?"

There were first years among the onlookers, and they had witnessed firsthand the fear that Aleist-one of the academy's strongest-felt towards Izumi.



Beckoned to Izumi's room, Sakuya sipped a warm drink as she explained what had happened. As she explained things starting from Luecke and ending in

Aleist, Izumi gave a wry smile.

“Being helpful to someone is important. But you see, is there really any need for you to hurry?”

Izumi’s admonishing words stuck deeply into her heart. Sakuya wouldn’t say anything about her own situation. She didn’t want to worry anyone.

“B-but I want to be useful too, and I want to repay everyone’s kindness...”

The voice Sakuya wrung out left Izumi troubled. She hadn’t been energetic as of late, and once she regained her energy, she suddenly said she wanted to be useful. Yet even as she said that, Sakuya looked terribly frail. Izumi decided to play along.

“Then will you hear out my request?”

“Sure!”

Seeing Sakuya’s delight, Izumi also felt happy. But Izumi didn’t have a particular request for Sakuya either. From what she had heard, something on the level of errands wouldn’t satisfy the girl, and as she’d only just started to feel better, Izumi didn’t want her to push herself.

She recalled the explanation Rudel gave when they had first met. She was a former goddess and one who decided occupation... it’s not as if Izumi believed it, but the one in question proclaimed to be a goddess with a straight face.

“My dream is to become a high knight. It would make me really happy if you could put a good luck charm on me.”

Even if she was told to give a good luck charm, Sakuya didn’t know what to do. But it was Izumi’s request. She didn’t have any power left as a goddess, but she tried her best to pray and grant her wishes.

Standing before Izumi, not in her usual manner of speech, she used the words she used as a goddess.

“I am she who doth leads; I am she who shall show thee thy path. She hath heard out thine request. Thou shalt stand above knights, and become the protector of this fair country...”

Izumi thought she looked almost like a real goddess as she gave Sakuya her

thanks.

“Thank you, Sakuya. With this, I can have some peace of mind. I’ve gotten a goddess’ certification, after all.”

“... No, I’m the one who should say thanks.”

Delighted, on the verge of tears, Sakuya clung onto Izumi. She didn’t want her to see her teary face.



When the first term was just about half-way through, Sakuya had managed to hear out a majority of the requests of her acquaintances at school. They were mostly errands, and it was more often than not that she received candy, but even so, she successfully accomplished it.

Only Fina’s turn had troubled her, but in the end, she was recognized as a junior disciple, and she was happy they were finally on good terms.

But a problem remained. It was Rudel. The one she was most indebted to, but even if she asked for his request, he would immediately reply he didn’t have one. In truth, Sakuya was under Rudel’s care, and her position was one where she received more than she gave. Rudel was the sort who would do his own things on his own, and she was unable to be of use.

But Sakuya wanted to repay Rudel’s by all means.

At the time, Rudel was looking at a letter from the palace. Alongside a permit to visit the dragon dwellings over the long vacation, it contained appointment documents for the two dragoons who would be accompanying him.

“Who’s it from?”

Curious, Sakuya tried asking. Rudel carefully put the papers away in his desk as he explained the situation.

“They gave me something like permission to enter the dragon dwellings. Originally, I wouldn’t have needed it, but it’s been decided that two dragoons will be accompanying me. They usually wouldn’t go along, but my position is one where they can’t let me venture out alone. Well, the two of them are acquaintances, so I don’t think it’ll be a problem.”

On Rudel's explanation, Sakuya recalled various things. The undead dragon, and Rudel's special circumstances... Sakuya wanted Rudel to become a dragoon no matter what. Having lost her power, she couldn't be of any use, but she wanted to do something for him.

There, Sakuya realized something she was capable of. While those around would definitely oppose, it was something she could do, no, it was something only she could do...

"So dragoons are coming!? Rudel, I want to go to the dragon dwellings too! No, I'm definitely going with you!!"

"It'll be over break, you know? Though I'll be returning to the house first."

"Take me with you! I'm begging you..."

Losing to a clinging Sakuya, Rudel gave her permission. The dragon dwellings were dangerous, so he thought he'd have her wait at his home. His sister Lena was there, and he held a naïve notion that she would make for a good playmate.

On the contrary, Sakuya had solidified her resolve.

Chapter 73: The Little Sister, the Friend, and a Little Bit of Dragon

Once the long break came upon the academy, Rudel took Sakuya along and returned to his house. Sakuya insisted that she had to go along no matter what, but as she parted with Izumi, it felt like she was pushing herself. With a continence as if she would burst into tears, Sakuya had forced a smile. It weighted on Izumi's mind as well, and she cautioned Rudel to look out for the girl.

Once she boarded the carriage bound for Arses territory, a scenery different from the academy delighted Sakuya. She made merry as if she were on a road trip. Seeing Sakuya having so much fun, Rudel felt relieved.

"I'm glad you're enjoying the road to my home, but the Arses Territory we're headed to isn't the best place to be."

The road to Arses Territory was brimming with vigor. But once they entered the territory, it would be almost like a different world. He wanted to warn Sakuya before she was disappointed, but her reaction was the opposite.

"Even if it's run down, it's all new to me! The scenery may all look the same to you, but just as it's similar, it's a completely new scene. Why don't you look around a bit more?"

Told off by Sakuya, Rudel gave a bitter smile as he read a book in the carriage. A tranquil time passed between the two.



Once they arrived at the Arses House estate, its castle-like scale surprised Sakuya. The world she had seen as a goddess, now she was seeing it through the eyes of a single human. There wasn't much of her life left to live, and Sakuya's heart was brimming with curiosity as she looked around the gorgeous manor. In that space, Rudel carried out his final preparations and awaited the arrival of the two dragoons.

Sakuya would sleep in the guest room prepared for her, but she wanted to

have a look at Rudel's room. She sought out Lena who she'd met before, and asked her for a tour around the mansion.

"You want me to show you around? Sure. I'll teach you my special route."

While younger than her in both body and soul, Lena dragged Sakuya by the hand as she led her around. Proceeding hidden through the courtyard, they made for the kitchen and pilfered some food.

They moved along the mansion's roof, peering into Erselica's room along the way.

"Hey, wait a second! Why are you peeping into your sister's room? Is that what you're into?"

Sakuya desperately clung to the roof in protest, so Lena approached with light movements to lend her a hand up. Looking into Erselica's room, they found the girl in low spirits.

"It's got nothing to do with tastes... ever since my other big brother was sent off to borderland, she's been considerably depressed. She cries when no one's watching, and if my brother was sent off to a dangerous place, I'd also... no, I think he'll be fine? He's stronger than me, and he's going to be the strongest man in the world someday."

"I heard it was a complicated family, but I really don't get it. Rudel and the other one, aren't they your brothers all the same?"

"You may be right, but they don't think of it that way. Until recently, everyone around was doing terrible things to my brother, and in essence, he was treated like a hindrance in the manor. On the contrary, I never even thought he would be evaluated as he is now."

Without making a particularly dark face, Lena recalled Rudel's reception at the estate that had continued until recently. She didn't bear a grudge. Lena herself, upon coming to the manor, she had obtained a secure lifestyle, and an environment that allowed her to learn. Just like Rudel, she was thankful.

"... Could you tell me more?"

Keep this a secret from my brother, Lena said as she sat on the spot, and told

her everything that had happened.



Having heard the tale from Lena, Sakuya had Lena lead her to Rudel's room. Because of Lena's guidance that had clearly taken too many side-stops, they took quite a detour before they arrived.

"Hey, it wasn't that far off from the guest room, was it? And wait, isn't it strange for Rudel's room to be in such a secluded space of the mansion?"

Rudel's room was positioned as if to keep it as far from the mansion as possible. Lena herself lived in the storehouse like room below Rudel. They had already been there for many years, and the ones in question didn't seem to care.

"Now that you mention it, I guess it's strange. Well, don't sweat the small stuff. Let's go search under the brozen one's bed."

"As a little sister, what do you think of that statement? Didn't you say you respect him?"

"Hah? It's because I respect him that I want to know what sort of women he likes, right? When he rarely gets distracted, I want to know his weakness."

Luckily, the master of the room was out, and Lena investigated the underside of his bed. Of course, when Rudel was living his life at the academy, there was no way there were any suspicious books in his room. But as she never had any friends in the mansion, the presence of Sakuya made her frolic even more merrily than usual.

Sakuya didn't look under the bed, but she did look around the room. It was even narrower than the room at the dorm, and far less luxurious than the guest room. Among the goals stuck up over the walls, a training regimen to become a dragoon was written up. The wooden sword leaned against the corner looked like it had gotten some good use.

Perhaps he had put in nothing but single-minded diligence, as it was a room with barely any unnecessary things in it. It was precisely the room of a young boy who had dreamed of dragoons from his youth. All that differed was an earnesty close to madness. He declared he would become a dragoon, and no

matter who mocked him, he would put in the effort. The room told the tale.

Seeing that room, Sakuya hardened her resolve. If that's how it is, then Rudel would surely be delighted...



Rudel's training spot in the estate went without saying.

He wouldn't use the training ground; away from the mansion, a nook of the all-too-vast yard had been his favorite spot ever since he was a child. If he used the training field in times apart from when the former mercenary soldier taught him, those around would jeer or get in his way and he couldn't concentrate.

After finishing his basic training, in order to polish his control on his magic, he constantly maintained a set level of mana on the palm of his hand. It was plain, but it was quite a difficult task, and he could continue it without tiring.

But last year included, the surrounding reactions were clearly creepy. The tutor who instructed him and the former mercenary soldier had been dismissed. No, to be more precise, the ones in question had fled. The servants who mocked him, and all who'd been terrible to him had fled in fear of Rudel.

And now, called from all over the territory, young female servants were stuck to Rudel's side. Even if he told them not to come, they would say it was the butler's orders, and fearfully follow along. According to them, they were told their houses would be secure if they could catch Rudel's eyes.

If he sent them away, they would only be scolded. Knowing he had to put a word in with the butler later, Rudel continued his training. But the girl who looked the youngest among them posed him a question. It was a disrespectful thing and her education had likely yet to go far. The face of the servant who seemed to be in charge went pale.

"Rudel-sama, you're going to become the feudal lord, right? Why are you aiming to be a dragoon?"

To that simple question from the girl, Rudel gave a curt response.

"Because it's my dream. I don't have an interest in anything else."

"Y-you can't! If you become head, the territory will get back its energy! My

parents and brothers won't have to be hungry anymore!"

"Stop it there!"

The girl who couldn't control her emotions was scolded by an older servant. Rudel didn't seem to pay it any particular mind. It wasn't something that interested him, but for Rudel who never had the slightest bit of expectations placed on him, the number of commoners counting on him had increased. The servants of the manor were also originally people of the territory.

Having misplaced expectations is just as troublesome as having no expectations at all, thought Rudel. Pardoning the emotional servant, he returned to his training.

Rudel thought that no one would ever endorse his dream, but giving up was the only thing he didn't want to do. He didn't want to cause anyone any trouble. He decided to give the butler a letter stating that no matter what happened to him, no one else need take responsibility.

As Rudel thought to himself, he felt that his own dream was built upon too many sacrifices. His people, his family... at this point, he had a position called white knight, and he was causing all sorts of trouble for the country. That's why Rudel didn't want to trouble anyone with the undead dragon.

Holding it all and cornered by the burdens he took onto himself, Rudel had lost sight of his surroundings.



The day he would set out for the dragon dwellings, his Rudel's former fiancé candidates Cattleya and Lilim came to the Arses House manor. They had been ordered to guard and keep watch over him, and when they arrived at the manor, Rudel was waiting.

Doing a final check on his preparations, Rudel saw there was some time until the promised hour, and invited them into the mansion.

Rudel had refused to let Sakuya go to the dragon dwellings, so she decided to negotiate with the two dragoons. Before the two of them, she carried a bag over her back as she lowered her head.

"I'm begging you! I have to go no matter what! Please take me with you."

At Sakuya's sudden appearance while they were supping tea, Cattleya and Lilim were surprised. But the contents requested of them wasn't something they could accept. While it was a dangerous place, it was also a place that required the country's permission. Lilim tried to give her a gentle refusal.

"I apologize for saying this on our first meeting, but I can't take up that request. Even if you're related to the Arses House, I can't let you into a place concerned with national security. I'm sorry."

As Sakuya still kept the look of youth, Lilim tried to deal with her gently, but Cattleya took the opposite approach.

"If you think we're on a picnic, then you'd better give up. The place we're headed is dangerous. Even with us guards here, if it comes to fighting a dragon, we might not be able to raise a hand. You'll just be in the way."

She had been rejected by both of them, but Sakuya wouldn't back down here. It was something only she could do, she told herself, as she actualized the 'dogeza', a special technique she had heard of from Izumi. Even the two dragoons were taken aback by her actions and will.

"I'm begging you! It is absolutely necessary that I go!"

As the room turned noisy, Lena happened to pass by.

"Oh, when I thought I heard a ruckus... you bullying her?"

Seeing Sakuya execute a dogeza, and the other two trying to stop her, Lena laughed in jest. But the two of them gave loud, immature rebuttals.

"That's not it!"

"I'm not!"

In the end, Sakuya was denied, so she went outside with Lena.



"What should I do... I really do have to go..."

Seeing Sakuya so down, Lena-who had become her friend-decided to lend some power. Having witnessed her serious face and the resolve in her eyes, she would cooperate without asking what Sakuya was trying to do. The two of them sat at the base of a tree in the yard as they spoke.

“You have to go no matter what, Sacky?”

Called Sacky, Sakuya silently nodded. It seems her resolve hadn't wavered.

“Then there's no helping it... my brother will get angry at me later, but it's Sacky's request, so I'll try to help out. Can you tell me what you want to do?”

“... I'm sorry, I can't say it. I'm sorry.”

Lena stood, and pulling Sakuya's hand, she headed for the dragons awaiting Cattleya and Lilim's return. Lena's actions startled her, and without a grasp on what was going on, Sakuya let herself be dragged along.

“Y-you won't ask anything?”

“As long as you're not trying to get in the brother's way, then I'll help you out. But you better be prepared for his anger when he finds you. Once you're found, you have to move wisely.”

“Lena...”

Pulled by the hand, Sakuya noticed a sort of charm she couldn't put to words in Lena. Her bold air that seemed to force everything to go her way... just having her there was reassuring.

They arrived at the dragons, and while they couldn't speak words, Lena made a plea to them in a loud voice.

“Hey, hey, let my friend here hide herself in your luggage.”

She declared it to Cattleya's fearsome red dragon without a moment's hesitation. Sakuya was the one who ended up the surprise. At the red dragon averted its face to signal its refusal, Lena suddenly started petting it.

“Don't be so angry. I'll throw in a freebie... how about something like this?”

As she gently pet it, the red dragon squirmed. It didn't seem to be in pain, but its body wrenched. If the large body of a dragon thrashed around, then there was sure to be damage around. Not paying any mind to that, Lena continued to gently pet it.

“So this is your weak point.”

As if she was petting a dog, she stroked the dragon without any fear. As a

result, the powerless red dragon silently turned its back towards Lena. Lilim's Wind Dragon opened its eyes wide as it stared at her.

The Red Dragon kept glaring at her, but Lena didn't seem to mind. It was nothing more than a shamefully shaking dragon staring at her.

"Sacky, hurry and hide."

As Lena gave her a push on the back, Sakuya took out a letter from her bags. As Lena received that bulky letter, Sakuya made a request.



As Rudel prepared to set out with Cattleya and Lilim, Lena alone had come to the dragons to see them off.

"Just you, Lena? What about Sakuya?"

"Sacky was depressed, so she might not come. More importantly, broster, before you go, you have to pet me! It's been so long since you pet me. I haven't been getting pet at all lately, so..."

Before his sister who requested the petting Izumi banned, Rudel thought this might be the last time, and decided to pet her. Seeing Rudel pet Lena's head-as she acted depressed-Lilim's ears turned red. Cattleya didn't know the situation, so she sent a fed-up eye to Lilim's panic.

"What are you so flustered about over some skinship between siblings? Don't get your knickers in a twist over something like that."

"Cattleya! You can only say that because you don't know! T-that isn't something so soft! Ah, now that you've made me recall, my ears are..."

Seeing her senior fidget, Cattleya thought she was exaggerating as she failed to grasp why Lilim looked so happy.

"What are you talking about? Just look at his little sister."

As Cattleya directed her eyes towards Rudel and Lena, Lilim also shifted her gaze from Cattleya to Rudel. There was the form of Rudel on his knees.

"... You've drowned in your craft. It definitely felt good, but right now, you fall short of how you once were. If you forget what's important. There's no

meaning to it!”

With a sorrowful look on her face, Lena looked down over Rudel. His shoulders dropped, Rudel stared at his hands. His sister had made him realize.

“S-so I forgot the most important thing. You mean to say I’ve drowned myself in pointless technique...”

Seeing Rudel seriously depressed, what about that? Cattleya thought as she watched. But Lilim alone felt true fear. At Lena who could take pets as if it were normal, and at Rudel who had raised his skills even further, but even now was called immature.

“Brother, what’s important is to accept... and that means love! You’re lacking the love! Too fixated on the technique, you’ve lost the most important thing. As I am now, I don’t even reach your ankles, but that alone I can tell.”

Unsteadily standing to his feet, Rudel looked into Lena’s eyes. He was making a cheery face as if he had accepted his defeat.

“To think the day would come for me to be told off by my sister. I’ve still got a long way to go. Thank you, Lena.”

“Don’t mind it. For you’re my prided brother! Let’s reach the summit together!”

Seeing the siblings exchange a smile, Lilim and the two dragons were shocked.

“I-it can’t be, you mean to say that still has a long way to go!? There’s no way such a thing could be permitted!”

‘For real!? It’s against the rules for someone to be better than that girly, dammit!!’

‘W-what a fearsome child of man...’

As the only one unable to keep up, Cattleya saw everyone heated up and thought.

(Huh? Am I the strange one?)

Chapter 74: The Legend and the Dragon

Arriving at the dragons' dwelling, the first thing Rudel's party did was secure a place to spend the night. With thick forests, deep seas and tall mountains, it was a holy land that humans couldn't inhabit, or at least that was the official stance. But as there were actual dragons living there, it was simply a dangerous place.

In that danger zone, you could call them lucky to be able to secure a campsite while protected by dragons.

But a problem came out at once.

"Why did you come along!? More importantly, how did you sneak in!?"

As Sakuya popped out of the luggage laden on her own red dragon, Cattleya held her head. She couldn't forgive that it had hidden the fact from its contractor, but it was even less permissible that the red dragon, called the most dangerous variant, let itself be approached so carelessly.

"Hah, it looks like someone'll have to send her back."

Seeing Lilim breathe a sigh, Cattleya tried to personally escort her back to Arses Territory. But the red dragon refused. Lilim's Wind Dragon also said it didn't want to return, if possible. They didn't want to send Sakuya home only to be stroked all over by Lena.

"You're my dragon, so listen to what I have to say!"

To Cattleya's scream, the red dragon offered an obstinate refusal.

'No way, fool! I-I decided not to get involved with that one again! My pride is in tatters. If you're my contractor, then you can at least notice that much!'

"Like I care! Just take her back!"

It seemed impossible for Cattleya, so Lilim directed a glance at the Wind Dragon. But the Wind Dragon averted its eyes to signal its refusal.

"... We'll be quite troubled if neither of you wants to do it."

'I refuse.'

In the end, they could only permit Sakuya's company.



“Why did you do something like this? In the worst case, you’ll be punished, and you won’t be able to become a dragoon.”

Having secured a place to sleep, Rudel and the others warily made their way through the forest. They needed to pay respect to the dragon whose territory they set up camp in. A water dragon living in the lake was the ruler of this area. It was higher ranking than both Cattleya and Lilim’s dragons, and a dangerous one to make an enemy of, or so the two dragons had warned them.

On the move, Rudel felt irritated at Sakuya as he asked for her reasons. When she was aiming to be a dragoon just like him, he was irritated she would choose an option that might sacrifice her future. The air she gave off didn’t make it seem she was taking any particularly calculated actions, so Rudel wanted to confirm her reasons.

“I-I was just a bit interested, and it’s not like I’m irrelevant to this matter. I have a reason I need to meet with the black fog... right!”

As she put a hand on the sheath of Rudel’s sword, the boar and bird who had been sleeping within corroborated her story. It was the most they could do to match Sakuya’s absurdity.

‘Y-yeah.’

‘That’s right. She needed to meet her quickly.’

The two who knew Sakuya’s plan made sure Rudel alone didn’t catch on as they frantically unraveled a reason off the top of their heads. There was a defect in the body the black fog produced, and they explained it required some tuning.

“Is that true? Why didn’t you tell me sooner? You’ve certainly been in poor shape lately, but...”

Even if he understood, Rudel couldn’t quite accept it, and as he was mulling, they reached the lake. In the thick forest, only the area of the lake received ample light from the sun. Reflecting that radiance, the lake gave a beautiful glimmer.

‘Rudel, make sure to leave no discourtesy. You are dealing with a dragon ranked higher than we, and this one is very hard to please.’

As the wind dragon explained, the two in Rudel’s sword let out their voices.

‘Isn’t that the dragon from before?’

‘That it is. When it’s supposed to be hard to please, that one was a reasonable dragon willing to hear us out, but...’

It was a water dragon they had previously met at the lake. It was here that Rudel encountered a legend...



The first semester was over, and once the academy went on vacation, Fritz was invited to the palace by Aileen. Having become a third year, Fritz had wanted to spend the break training himself in preparation for the individuals’ tournament, but as it was Aileen’s request, he left for the palace.

Raised in the countryside of Arses Land, Fritz had become an adventurer and left the sticks to work. Having been able to raise a name for himself in cities on the outskirts, Fritz was quite something himself. But always a big fish in a small pond, even after he went outside, he still failed to understand his own position.

The cause was Aileen.

When it came to Aileen, she publically interacted with him as a princess, but when they were alone, they would drop the honorifics. Aileen herself took a liking to it, but those around weren’t quite so pleased.

Having become a knight from a commoner, and always so upfront with her, Fritz was Aileen’s ideal in itself. That’s why she couldn’t permit it. By no means had she actually recognized Fritz’ power. The reason Fritz’ twisted recognition of himself grew to such a level was surely Aileen’s fault.

Let into a detached installment of the palace, Fritz entered the facility where the gray dragons were raised. There, Aileen waited with a number of high knights. Aileen greeted Fritz with a smile.

“Fritz-sama, I am glad you were able to make it.”

“Aileen-sama, what business have you called me for today?”

Fritz started the conversation still on his feet, but no one would call it disrespectful. This was because Aileen permitted it. Internally, the high knights wanted to knock him off his feet. No, they could cut him down too.

“I do feel greatly pained to invite you to such a place. But when I think of Courtois’ future, there is something I must accomplish by all means.”

As Aileen began speaking of the country with an enigmatic face, Fritz’ heart skipped a beat. The country was in a critical condition, and he was happy to be relied on. To Fritz whose desire to be a hero far exceeded the average man, Aileen’s words were sweet on his ears.

“Can you give me the details?”

“Certainly. Have you heard the rumors of the white and black knights?”

Fritz nodded with a reluctant look on his face. Because Rudel and Aleist were existences Fritz couldn’t forgive. He couldn’t forgive that those two had been selected for knight positions you could equate to the heroes of yore. It was simply a child’s jealousy, and Fritz understood that.

“The black knight is an upstart of a noble, so the palace will be able to take the appropriate measures. But the white knight is Rudel of the notorious Arses House. The palace has devised some adequate means, and that is what the Royal Guard is to be. That would mean granting a powerful level of authority to Rudel.”

Simple as he was, Fritz easily believed Aileen’s words. To Fritz, the Arses House was evil. Some part of him was convinced they were seeking out greater authority.

“Rudel is of an archduke lineage, so if he was so minded, he would be able to take me or my sister as a wife. If that happens, then Courtois is over... Fritz-sama, won’t you come to our salvation?”

“Save? If there’s something I can do, I’ll help out, but...”

Hearing Fritz’ words, Aileen gave a bewitching smile.

“Fritz-sama, in these halls lies the dragon that will be used to select the royal guard captain... do you think you could tie a contract with that dragon?”

Aileen's plan was steadily moving forward, but unlike her sister Fina, she was soft on the finish. She had ignored the fact Rudel had made for the dragon dwellings. It would be a godsend if he croaked out there, was all she thought of it. If Fina were in her position, she would definitely have sent in assassins.

And as reality would have it, Rudel's guards turned out to be the ones closest to him, his former fiances. That had been a result of Fina's schemes.



Meanwhile, Rudel was so surprised, his voice wouldn't come out. As the water dragon appeared from the lake, its large size and beauty had stolen his eyes. What's more, he recognized the traits of the dragon before him.

Lilim's dragon gave a purr to call that dragon, and it showed respect to its superior. On top of that, it explained the situation. The dragon called out looked over Rudel and the others. Perhaps it wasn't particularly interested as it started off back towards the lake.

While it permitted their stay, it indicated that it had no mind to let Rudel ride its back.

But looking at the back of that beautiful dragon, Rudel cried out in a loud voice.

"Are you the dragon of Marty Wolfgang-sama!?"

Everyone was surprised, but the reactions varied. The two dragons were surprised he committed such discourtesy against a high-ranking foe, while Cattleya and Lilim wondered who that was to begin with. Sakuya alone, after a moment of surprise, began sending the same dreamy eyes as Rudel.

"A-amazing! To be able to meet the dragon of the real Marty-sama!!"

But the most surprised of all was surely the water dragon. It was usually a hard to please one without the slightest mind to converse with humans, but to make sure everyone could hear, it sent its voice to everyone's head. It reminisced as its tensions rose with Rudel's words.

'I'm shocked. To think there was a human who knew about Marty... what's more, even adding a -sama, you sure know your stuff! Name yourself.'

“Rudel, I’m Rudel Arses!”

The water dragon approached him. The distance between them was a meter, but facing a dragon, the intensity was on another level. But the two active dragoons had no recollection of the name Marty.

“Senpai, who’s Marty?”

“No idea. Since he knows a dragon, could he be a former dragoon?”

But the two dragons did remember Marty. To be more precise, they knew the rumors.

‘Oy, they’re talking about that guy, right? That crazy old man, right?’

‘Fool! Don’t say anything to ruin this!’

The red dragon was still categorized as one of the younger dragons, and its mocking statement at Marty received a proper recompense.

‘Brat over there! What did you just saaay!!?’

A dragon larger and higher-ranking than it snapped at its neck and pulled it into the lake. Leaving aside the dazed surroundings, a number of pillars of water broke the surface. After a number of intense impacts, the area suddenly went silent. The water dragon came up once more, and a little later, the red dragon bobbed to the surface.

Seeing her own unconscious dragon, Cattleya couldn’t keep up with the situation.

“Eh? Huh!? Wait, what’s going on!?”

Lilim bound her arms behind her back and calmed her so talks could restart.

‘I never thought I’d hear Marty’s name from a human tongue. How truly nostalgic... urrrgh, Why’d you have to go off and die, stupid Marty!! You said we would be together forever! So why’d you have to go off on your own!!?’

Reminiscing and bursting into tears, it was quite a busy dragon, so Lilim thought as she covered her ears. For a dragon to weep, it would mean for a roar. The air shook to an extent she could feel with her body.

As they waited for the dragon to calm down, Rudel preciousy produced a single book from his bag. How to Pet a Dragon... the book Marty left behind.

Turning to the final page, he conferred Marty's words for the dragon.

"It was written in the book. 'To the one I love, I'll surely be the first to go, but do not grieve. And do not let yourself be caught. I didn't want to place shackles on your freedom after my death. Because I loved you'."

Rudel let the dragon hear the words that made those gathered want to vomit up sugar. Lilim writhed in embarrassment, while Cattleya was visibly bashful. Inside, her girly side wanted to be told something like that.

Once Rudel finished reading, the dragon began to sob. Seeing that scene, both Lilim and Cattleya teared up too. They were surely separated by death. They concluded from the dragon's manner of speech. Even if he rode a dragon, he was human at the base. When the time came, he would be killed in action.

"What a beautiful relationship. But for him to die early..."
"I'd like a certain idiot dragon to learn a thing or two from them. Well, he was a dragoon, so he must have fallen in battle..."

'What are you talking about? Marty didn't die in battle. He stayed in active duty to the age of eighty.'

"Eh?"
"Hah!"

'Around the end of it, these important looking guys would come every day to complain on and on, and he would ignore them. But when they made fun of me in front of Marty, Marty would get angry... they would fight quite a bit. Even after he passed sixty, he received numerous cases of disciplinary action. At the end, they sent us off to a place called the borderland(?) but we were happy nonetheless.'

That's gone way passed the level of a problem child, right? The two dragoons thought as they looked at the dragon. After that, the two boyfriend-less souls reluctantly listened in as the dragon spoke fondly of him. Opposing seemed dangerous, so they listened with obedient looks on their faces, but their expressions were stiff.

'I was with Marty since he was twenty, so I was only able to be with him for a mere sixty years! What do you mean, eternal happiness!? Show a bit of

willpower! Don't you think he could've held on a bit more? The presents and memories he gave me every year were...'

The two of them reaffirmed the difference in sense between human and dragon, but Rudel and Sakuya were deeply moved as they heard out her story.



The first night since they came to the dragons' dwelling. Rudel carried out a final check on his weapon. Once he checked everything from start to finished, he recalled the sleeping drug he had mixed in their dinner. He had made sure to prepare something that wasn't dangerous. The three of them would likely sleep until noon, he thought as he lay himself down.

He did have some resistance to putting medicine into a woman's drink, but Rudel had a goal he couldn't concede. There was no way his two guards would permit the sheer danger of his actions. And it would be too dangerous for Sakuya. He decided to put the three of them to sleep.

But there, he felt a presence outside of his tent.

"Sakuya?"

"Hehe, can I come in?"

As Sakuya entered the tent, she held a picture book dearly in both her hands. It was one of the dragoon picture books Rudel would read to her.

"You can't sleep?"

Rudel had his misgivings the drug didn't work, but Sakuya's answer was a simple one.

"I'm sleepy, but before I slept, I wanted you to read this."

Thinking it might be the final night, Rudel agreed to read her the book. And Sakuya fell asleep before he could read it to the end. She slept with an extreme look of relief.

The morning of the next day, equipped with a sword and full-body armor, Rudel made for the undead dragon's cave under the guidance of the two beasts. For the two dragoons sleeping soundly, he left a letter detailing the circumstance.

And he made a plea to the two dragons.

‘Let you go alone? I can’t say it’s a bright idea for you to move around on your own.’

‘Yesterday’s granny was kind to humans, so it wasn’t a problem, but the next one you meet might come at you without question.’

“No problem. And when you face a dragon, you have to be alone... I’m leaving those three to you.”

The two of them saw Rudel off. Right, if you tried to obtain a dragon, there would always be dangers. If you had strong guards with you, a dragon would never recognize your merit.

Once Rudel walked off, it was Sakuya’s turn to wake. She had heard about the drink from the boar and bird, so she was able to avoid it. Leaving her bags behind, she traveled lightly as she tailed Rudel. But in the path Rudel walked, the two dragons stood in her way.

“What are you doing!? Step down already!”

‘Not happening.’

‘I made a promise with him. To look after you three.’

Sakuya wanted to hurry, but she couldn’t do anything against two dragons. Having come so far, there was no meaning if she couldn’t do anything. She prayed to the heavens as she wondered if there was anything she could do. But under the heartless sky, only time would pass by.

It was there that a single large dragon approached. It was Marty’s dragon.

‘Looks like you’re doing something interesting, you guys.’

As the two dragons got the jitters, Sakuya alone clung onto the water dragon. With a serious look on her face, she tried persuading it to take her to Rudel who had made for the undead dragon.

“Please help me! I absolutely have to go beyond this point! I’m begging you...”

The water dragon’s large eyes glared at Sakuya. As Sakuya didn’t take a single step back, the water dragon was reminded of Marty in his youth.

Straightforward and desperate eyes. Resolved for something, the eyes of one

who would risk their life.

‘I like those eyes. I won’t let you on my back, but you may follow behind me.’

‘T-that would be troubling...’

‘Well now, I guess I didn’t see anything after all.’

“T-thank you!”

Sakuya hurriedly chased Rudel as he made for the undead dragon. Time-wise, she was a few hours late. If she didn’t hurry, she would never make it in time.

Chapter 75: The Goddess and Those that Don't Exist

'Are you fine with that?'

The water dragon walked up front, and Sakuya followed behind. There were nothing but dangerous dragons around, and a moment's lapse could have her killed. To ease Sakuya's tensions, the water dragon had heard out her goal. It had heard of the undead dragon, but it didn't think that was a problem Sakuya could do anything about.

But after hearing Sakuya's goal, the water dragon turned despondent. Her life was short, and she had made the decision to end it... to the dragon who valued the soul, Sakuya's further actions felt exceptionally noble.

"I-I'm so scared I can't stop shaking. B-but you see... there's nothing that can be done! I can't live even if I want to! I wanted to try harder! I wanted to be together longer! So... at the very least, I should be helpful at the end."

As Sakuya's eyes went teary, the water dragon lowered its back. The sudden happenings left Sakuya surprised.

'I haven't let anyone ride me in over a hundred years. Be grateful. From now on, I'm going to have to insist I'll never let a man ride me. Temporary as it is, right now, you are a splendid dragoon.'

"Thank you."

Sakuya leapt onto its back. The water dragon spread out its large, pale, transparent wings, and took to the sky.



In the cave that reeked of decay, Rudel took on the undead dragon. Perhaps it hadn't completely awakened, as its lower body couldn't move, only its upper half and right wing showing a range of motion. It was mostly bone, but some rotten flesh still ardently stuck to it. It was an extremely unsightly dragon.

'W-why... why are you alone...'

At Rudel's appearance, the black fog that had been taken in let out a cry that

was almost a scream. But her voice had weakened from before, and it seemed the fog's awareness was gradually growing dim. The boar gave Rudel a simple explanation of the situation.

‘This is bad. The black fog has been almost entirely taken in, and the undead dragon is attacking everything, no questions asked. To be quite honest, I think you should give up and retreat.’

“That’s not an option. While it’s also for my sake, Sakuya has business with the black fog. She can’t be helped if it fades away. I can’t step down, and it doesn’t look like it’ll let me.”

The undead dragon used its arms to move towards Rudel. As a subspecies of gaia dragon, its arms had developed more than the other dragons. Its rotten flesh and body of bones was much faster than it appeared.

Pulling his sword, Rudel held his left hand up front and shot a bolt of light.

A number of those shots rained down on the undead dragon and exploded, but it continued its advance as if they had no effect at all. As Rudel tried to move from the spot, a sticky something that wasn’t mud captured his feet. It had a stickiness to it, and to Rudel who had thought to fight a hit-and-run battle, he was conducting combat in an exceptionally disadvantageous location.

“It’s faster than I had imagined!”

‘You’re in luck it isn’t at full power. But if you want to use your full power, you’ll have to get outside... it’s a bit deep ahead, so be careful.’

The bird calmly relayed information on the dim cave interior to Rudel. A battle where it was hard to see had him hard-pressed. But as he had awoken as a white knight, the battle actually raged on quite favorably. He used his light bolts, and when an opening was made, he’d cut with his magic sword.

He continually secured points his opponents attacks couldn’t reach as he began to push the undead dragon back.

“When it’s head is practically bone, it’s a mystery how it can tell our location.”

As he ran the undead dragon gave chase, and Rudel calmly put up countermeasures. But the way things were going, he could foresee his loss in

the end. Avoiding the arms and wings it swung around, he thought of nothing more than to save the fog.

‘Sorry to intrude when you’re in a good state of mind, but at this rate, you’ll run out of mana or stamina. You’ll eventually lose.’

The bird’s conclusion was right. Having been able to fight so far on his own, Rudel was strong, but to the end, it was a human’s strength. When compared to a dragon, it was only natural he was a bad match. Without any comrades to help him, Rudel fought by on his own as he tried to think up a means to get the black fog out of it.

“More than victory, saving the fog is our first priority. I came here to obtain a dragon. There’s no point in just winning!”

On those words Rudel told himself, the boar gave a simple explanation.

‘There is a way, but the dragon’s original soul is the problem. On top of being ruled by feelings of fear and isolation, it’s blocking off all interference from the outside.’

The bird took over the bird’s explanation.

‘Meaning your voice won’t reach it. Its guard is so strong the black fog failed when it tried to interfere with it directly. It’s the sort of monster that devours life to steals its soul away, and there’s no point calling out to it from the outside... from the outside, that is.’

As Rudel ran around, the undead dragon started taking different action from before. Both its wings began to move, and gradually the rest of its body followed along. Alongside an overwhelming difference in physique, the limited space pushed Rudel into a corner.

I have to attack with all my might, otherwise... thought Rudel, but as the undead dragon unleashed its own full might, it exceeded his expectations. His goal had changed to saving the black fog for Sakuya’s sake, and he had to give his all to avoid his own annihilation. He had been much too greedy.

“So I was too hasty...”

A red light took residence in the eye sockets of its skeletal head. As if to take

the place of eyes, they focused on Rudel. Correcting his stance, Rudel laughed before the undead dragon.

His selfish self was strange. When he was aiming to be a dragoon, the very fact he was fighting a dragon was strange. And that he wouldn't give up even in this situation was even stranger. He had chosen such an idiotic option of challenging a dragon alone... but he didn't regret it.

"I'll definitely make you my dragon!"

Rudel took a large step towards the dragon before his eyes.



Sakuya and the water dragon finally reached the cave. From the entrance, they would hear the screams of battle and the sound of explosions. Light tremors broke out here and there.

'... This is a place a dead dragon remains prisoner. To think an empty husk could move again... I can't bear to see its eternal torment.'

The water dragon grieved the pain of its brethren, but there was fundamentally no means to save it. Neither side could interfere with the others. Sakuya on its back hardened her resolve as they set foot into the cave. It was originally a cave excavated out by a dragon, and the water dragon could pass through it with ease.

'You're nervous. It's not too late, you know?'

"I'm not giving up. I mean... this is the only way I can be useful."

Trembling as she smiled, Sakuya was too worried about the events going on in the cave to help it. If Rudel died, there was practically no point in her objective.

'They're cornered. The child inside, and you... hold on tight.'

As the water dragon hurried on in, the intense sounds of battle suddenly weakened. The explosions stopped ringing out entirely. In a panic, Sakuya called out Rudel's name.



"Rudel!!"

As he crashed into the wall, Rudel no longer had the power left to move a finger. Because of his sturdy armor and shield, he had managed to persist in one piece, but his energy and mana to move had run reached its end. He had tried fighting the undead dragon with everything he had, but even with his full-power attacks he had prepared as his trump card, defeating the dragon was impossible.

Sakuya's voice suddenly entered his ear, but he was unable to respond to it. He noticed the large footsteps and vibrations gradually approaching him weren't those of the undead dragon.

'She's here!'
'You're late, Sakuya!'

Having leapt out of Rudel's sword, the boar and bird had used what mana they had left to project their original bodies, frantically clinging onto the undead dragon to protect Rudel. But as the dragon thrashed about to remove them, they were only able to cling on. There wasn't any time.

They had preserved their power for that moment alone, but if Rudel died, then everything would be lost. The two had manifested. Manifested and bought some time.

"Rudel...!"

His form Sakuya witnessed, it was the form of his dented, chipped armor with injuries around his eyes. It was impossible to tell from over his armor, but perhaps his body was in a terrible state as well.

His armor was stained black, and while his breath wasn't strange, it was weak. She couldn't see his usual self, full of confidence. But she didn't despite. Up until her mouth came close, she was smiling.

Finally sensing Sakuya's presence, blood flowed from Rudel's mouth as he wrung out his voice.

"S-Sakuya, r-run..."

He was surprised at the entrance of another dragon, but having lost his vision, he couldn't confirm it. For now, he could only think of letting Sakuya escape to report to the country. He had pushed it and caused the undead dragon to

awaken. Rudel recognized his own irresponsibility as he accepted his failure.

Not that he regretted working hard for his dream, he simply accepted the result. Sakuya thought that acceptance wasn't like him as all, but she could feel that his battered form had put up resistance to the bitter end. In truth, he was losing a lot of blood, and Rudel was on the verge of death.

But as Sakuya approached, she planted a kiss on Rudel's forehead.

"I'm sorry, Rudel. But if nothing else, I'll grant your dream..."

"Wha.. ar... ou..."

Sakuya's tears fell onto his face. Rudel couldn't understand what Sakuya was trying to say. His consciousness began to grow distant...



"Please, help me out! Take me over to it!"

Parting from Rudel, Sakuya requested help from the water dragon. The boar and bird weren't enough to hold back the undead dragon. Sakuya had intended to end things before it came to this. But speaking to results, Rudel was in critical condition, and the undead dragon had sprung to action.

'... Very well.'

The water dragon opened its mouth, creating a sphere of water and firing it with good momentum. It wasn't that the water came from its mouth, it gathered water from the area and shaped it into a spear. It smashed a number of those into the undead dragon, sending it flying into the opposite wall.

It was weakened from its battle with Rudel, and the water dragon was a dragon abundant in combat experience. It wasn't a simple attack, the dragon had compressed a considerable amount of water, and as those orbs collided they burst as if explosion. By compacting the water, it was able to fire something like a laser as well, but that didn't suit its objective, so it held back in its attacks.

The boar and bird separated from the undead dragon, and this time the water dragon pinned it down from above. Perhaps it was losing its ability to maintain its body as its bones and flesh easily tore and snapped. But even now, there was

no sign it would stop moving.

While it was held down, its skeletal head remained as it was. It violently moved its mouth, its red glowing eyes fluttering tempestuously. There, the black fog began to regain consciousness.

‘T-this is... so that’s what it is.’

Sakuya approached the undead dragon’s mouth with her body that was nearing its limit. Perhaps understanding the general gist of things, the black fog confirmed the present situation with the boar and the bird.

‘Even bringing a dragon here, and yet Rudel still hasn’t a dragon of his own?’

‘It’s just as we thought. Rudel will never be chosen by a dragon.’

‘The dragon holding it down is one that Sakuya brought.’

‘... You’re the goddess from back then, right? You’ve thought up quite the audacious thing.’

The boar and bird kept it simple, but they explained the events up to now. As the black fog consented, it altered its ignition goal. At first, it had intended to use the undead dragon’s remains. But here they had Sakuya, a girl with the soul of a goddess. If everything was assembled, there was no need to waste it.

‘Sakuya, was it? Are you fine with this?’

The skull of the undead dragon before her eyes. Sakuya felt fear as she nodded. The water dragon saw that, and everyone apart from Rudel could guess what she was going to do.

For the sake of just a single human, Sakuya and the three beasts would become sacrifices.

Sakuya turned only once to looked at Rudel, shedding tears as she muttered with a smile. Seeing the unconscious, fallen Rudel, she recalled all that happened since she obtained a body. A majority of her happy memories only came after she attained physical form. Someone was always with her and she was never lonely.

It was all things she could never obtain in her time as a goddess.

“Goodbye, Rudel. I loved you.”

Sakuya leapt into the mouth of the undead dragon. In what was originally the sturdy jaw of a gaia dragon, Sakuya lost her life in an instant. But her soul was taken in... and that was her goal...



‘Looks like it went well... is it my turn next?’

‘You’re going first?’

‘It doesn’t matter. We’ll disappear all the same.’

The water dragon parted from the undead dragon that had stopped moving. Seeing the actions of Sakuya and the three, it had a good guess at everything they were trying to do. So it made a proposal.

‘You’ve saved my kinsman, so I’ll help out too. You lot are much too awkward for the task.’

‘I see, thank you.’

After giving a word of thanks, the black fog stopped resisting and plunged into the undead dragon on its own.

‘You have my deepest gratitude for your assistance. I’m leaving Rudel to you.’

The boar said its thanks, turned to mana, and faded away. As its body dissolved into grains of light, those grains made off in Rudel’s direction.

‘Why am I even here... it doesn’t look like I can pay back this debt.’

The bird complained, but the water dragon shook its head.

‘It was originally our problem for not being able to save this one. I can only wonder why we left it so long to begin with... anyways, don’t think of this as a debt. Go forth with peace of mind.’

‘... It really is a strange tale. Why are we... it couldn’t...’

The bird tried to say something before disappearing like the boar. But the three of them gave off a satisfied feel. The bird dissolved into light, and as that light headed off towards Rudel, the water dragon roared in the cave. At the same time, the dark cave was wrapped in a warm light. That roar from the cave resounded all throughout the dragon dwellings.



As Rudel regained consciousness, he couldn't see, but he felt he was being protected by something warm. Opening his eyes, he found he wasn't in the cave; it was a vast space of white nothingness.

"T-this is... my body doesn't hurt. What happened to me? Why can I see? Where's Sakuya!? What happened with the undead dragon!?"

As he regained consciousness, he gradually recalled the events that led him there. But he couldn't understand the situation. Keeping wary of his surroundings, he thought, when a voice called out to him from behind.

'Rudel, it's alright.'

He turned to find Sakuya standing there with a smile. Relieved, Rudel tried to approach Sakuya, but no matter how far he proceeded, the distance between them wouldn't shrink. Feeling some anxiety, Rudel called loudly for her.

"Come over here, Sakuya!"

Sakuya made a troubled face as she shook her head. And this time, some voices came from his right. The voices of the fog, the boar and the bird. They were in their original large forms, letting out an air as if they were relieved. But he wasn't able to approach them either.

"What' happened!? Where are we!? Are you all..."

Some part of him understood that his bad premonition had hit the mark. But he couldn't accept it. Sakuya looked at Rudel's panic, giving a warm smile as she held her hands out as if to splash water on him. Atop her palms floated something that gave off a warm light.

'I managed to persuade him. I managed to obtain his body... this child will return to the flow of souls, and he said we could do what we wanted with his body. He told me to tell you he's sorry.'

"What are you talking about!? Just get over here already!"

Reaching out his hand, Rudel tried to grasp Sakuya. But Sakuya started to let out light, without even trying to move. This time the black fog called over to Rudel.

‘Making a fool of yourself, and at the end, you give up with a satisfied look about your face!? What happened to your promise with me, you damn fool! ... I’ll forgive you just this once. There won’t be a next time.’

Next was the boar. Saying it was his turn, he sent some words to Rudel.

‘It was surprisingly fun. When we were born for nothing more than to get in your way, I get the feeling we were able to oppose it in the end. This is my gratitude. I want you to accept it... turn it into the power to oppose.’

As the boar disappeared, the armor and sword equipped on Rudel let off light. The armor that gave off an uncouth feel was adorned with lovely ornaments. On both the armor and the sword, a pattern began to surface. In his left hand, the shield he had never held appeared. It wasn’t a large shield, but it was adorned with decorations to match the sword and armor, a pattern across it.

That same pattern on the boar and the bird faintly surfaced on them all.

That white, gleaming form was surely worthy of the white knight.

Next, the bird called over to Rudel. As those around began imparting words of parting, Rudel thought his heart was being plucked out. He wanted to scream at them to stop, but his voice wouldn’t come out.

‘Since you injured your eyes, do you want me to give you some? I have a lot of eyes, I always thought I had a few too many. Oppose it to the end... it’s unfortunate I won’t know how it turns out, but if it’s you...’

Right after, Rudel felt something in his eyes, but now wasn’t the time for that. Before his eyes, the bird had disappeared. He desperately sprinted, but the distance would never close. It was the black fog’s turn.

‘From me, you’ll be getting a heart. It’s a heart I obtained from changing my path, but it’s not like ill intent was all I ever gained. I shall give you the heart of a dragon... when I’ve done so much for you, next time, you better not give up until the end! Everyone’s cheering you on.’

The black fog disappeared as if it had cleared up. Rudel looked at Sakuya and reached out his hand again. But Sakuya didn’t try to take it. She only looked at him and smiled.

“What I shall give you is a goddess’ soul. With this, you have a dragon’s body, heart and soul together. I’m sure you’ll get an amazing dragon! You’re inheriting the goddess Sakuya-sama’s soul after all!!”

Seeing her usual energetic form, Rudel turned sorrowful. It was all a result of him not wanting to drag anyone into his dream, and it had all backfired.

“Is it my fault? Was I wrong? Why do you guys have to go so far!? It’s just my petty, selfish dream! There’s no reason for you to sacrifice...”

“There is!”

Sakuya confronted Rudel, screaming to interrupt his words. Touching both her hands to her hips, she made a pose to clearly signal she was angry as she scolded him.

‘You dream is my dream too! It’s a dream everyone wants to grant! So it isn’t a dream for you alone anymore. It’s a dream that Izumi and Luecke and Eunius and Lena and Stupid Aleist all want to come true! There are lots of them. There are lots of people supporting your dream!’

“But even so, this is a seed sown by my own selfish actions. It’s all my fault!”

So you don’t have to become a sacrifice, Rudel tried to continue on, but he ended up stopping. Because Sakuya was crying.

‘I’m sorry. It must have been lonely. It must have been painful. But Rudel, you’re not alone anymore. I’m begging you, please notice it! You’ll make everyone sad.’

On those words, Rudel cried as well. He didn’t know why, but his tears welled out. Sakuya wiped her tears and smiled as she made a plea to Rudel.

‘Can I make one final request?’

Rudel wiped his tears as well as he smiled at Sakuya. It was the sort of painful smile where you could tell he was forcing it. But thinking that Sakuya wouldn’t want to see any more of his pitiful form, Rudel made a smile.

“Sure. It’s my time to do something for you.”

‘You have to look after Izumi, okay? Treasure her. And tell everyone I said hi. And also, and also...’

After a stream of trifling requests, Sakuya finally made a serious face as she looked at Rudel. She told Rudel to kneel and offer up a prayer, so Rudel abided. After taking a deep breath, Sakuya returned to her goddess speech as she did with Izumi.

Her current form was more sublime than it had ever been before.

‘I am she who doth show the way; I am she who shall show he who opposes fate his path... Thou shalt be the strongest of dragoons. Thou shalt be the strongest of knights. Thou shalt become the shield that protects the country and the weak. Henceforth, you shall be the White Dragoon... farewell, mine beloved.’

Rudel’s consciousness grew distant once more...

Chapter 76: The Young Man and the White Dragon

The academy's vacation ended and the second term began. But Rudel had yet to show himself at the academy. Even when they confirmed it with the Arses House, a reply came back that he had yet to return. The country also sent out an investigation, but it had yet to show any results.

A certain rumor was spreading through the campus it was...

'Rudel is dead.'

They would whisper. Even the two active dragoons didn't return, so the rumor was even spreading through the castle. In the end, it was no good. The voices that said he should've just given up had increased.



"Try saying that again! I'll split open that empty head of yours!"

As Eunius raised a serious yell, the cafeteria fell silent at once. He used one hand to lift up his opponent by the lapels, bringing his face close. His opponent was Fritz. Practically anyone would cower, but even if Fritz looked at Eunius, all he could see was a farce.

"About how Rudel died? It's true, isn't it? Ah, perhaps he got scared and ran away. Oh, he might come back for next week's selection test."

Having exchanged a contract with a dragon, it was already decided that Fritz would become the royal guard captain. Once he graduated, he would work at the palace. Convinced that he had triumphed over Rudel, his usual attitude had inflated even more. They held true even when dealing with a high ranking noble.

Even worse were Fritz' followers. By the fact that Fritz was strong, and that the first princess knew him well, the young nobles would always fall silent. Those around Fritz had gotten around to think that was only natural, and even if Eunius yelled, they wouldn't try to stop him. On the contrary, Eunius' followers stepped in to bring a ceasefire.

"Eunius-sama, you're picking a fight with the wrong guy."

“Let’s just calm down here, alright?”

As his followers pulled him from Fritz, Eunius clicked his tongue. Before turning his back to Fritz, he gave a warning.

“That guy, you know. He never gives up, and he never runs away.”

Seeing off Eunius’ back as he walked off, Fritz made a dark smile. By Aileen, his state was completely on cloud nine. He was certain he had the power to change this country. Recognized by a dragon, he had gotten the idea he had triumphed over Rudel, and he misunderstood that he had the ability to back it.

Gray dragons were more docile than their wild variant, and as long as you had a certain level of skill, you could make a contract. But Fritz didn’t know that.

In the cafeteria, Izumi who had been looking at the ruckus from afar, shifted her eyes to the outside of the window. She prayed he would come back, perhaps on a dragon or something, acting as if nothing had happened at all. But her heart felt strangely uneasy.

“Come back soon Rudel, Sakuya...”

The words Izumi muttered at the window sill, no one came to give a response.



The day of the selection test came to pass, but Rudel had still yet to appear at the academy.

Izumi grew worried, and she decided to participate in the event to wait for Rudel. Rudel was forcefully obligated to take part in the event. To speak to the contrary, it would be a problem if he wasn’t there.

Izumi looked over the legions of knights filling the hall. For the same reason, they had come to the selection test, but Eunius and Luecke didn’t have any interest in the royal guard position either.

Aleist alone was overly mindful of the imperial guard. He was worried about Rudel as well, but to those around, it looked as if he wanted to become captain himself. The real reason he was there was because royal guard captain was the protagonist’s official post. As Aleist had been largely separated from the story, he had only taken part out of curiosity of who would be chosen.

The royal guard would fulfill a large role in the story's war arc. Aleist wanted to confirm who would bear the burden.

There were lots of acquaintances to be found in the hall, but they were far outnumbered by active knights. There were a few high knights taking part while the dragoons conducted security. The high knights protecting the royal family looked at their comrades with conflicted emotions. The dragoons alone were knights who had already been chosen by dragons, so they didn't hold the qualifications to participate.

Just by being chosen, you would become the captain of a new special unit that ranked up with the dragoons and high knights. The hall was wrapped in a peculiar excitement. But Izumi and the others would have none of it, simply looking around in worry.

'Henceforth, the selection test for royal guard captain shall be conducted! To you knights who think you have what it takes please approach the dragon on the stage!'

Watched over by the royal family, the gray dragon guided by the dragoons descended onto the stage. The knights lined up on stage paid their respects to the king before walking up to the dragon one by one. Even if it was a gray dragon, there was no doubt it was a dragon nonetheless. It held an intensity to it, and there were many knights who were frightened just by approaching it.

But the dragon accustomed to humans showed no interest in anything as it simply watched on.

There were many knights taking part, and there was still a long while to come. Izumi concluded so as she waited for Rudel.

(It'll probably take a while, but if Rudel doesn't make it back by then... the royal family's watching, and even if he came now, he'd be late. Even when he's never been late to class before.)

As the number of knights in the hall gradually diminished, those around her waited irritatingly while Izumi grew restless. But as someone she recognized made it up to the stage, the dragon showed interest.

Izumi thought this selection test was, in itself, a rigged race in order to make

people recognize Rudel's position, so the sight surprised her. The dragon snuggled close to Fritz as it recognized him as its contractor.

"Izumi, have you seen Rudel?"

While the surrounding knights fell into a slump, Luecke walked over to Izumi's side. He was looking around, but he couldn't see Rudel anywhere.

"... I haven't. But what's all this about? Wasn't Rudel supposed to be selected?"

"I don't know either. It was something decided from the start, but for things to be settled before Rudel even got here... more importantly, Izumi, look at the king's seat. Doesn't that look unnatural?"

Hearing that from Luecke, Izumi looked to where the royal family sat. The ministers who seemed to be responsible had drawn close to the king. They were making a ruckus over something, but all eyes in the hall had been gathered on Fritz. She saw the high knights frantically pull the curtain to cut off her line of sight.

From the king's bearing, she could tell this was an unexpected event. The queen was also receiving an explanation from the high knights. But before the curtain close, Aileen and Fina alone quietly watched over the event. Though the knights around Fina were in a frenzy.

"Princess Aileen did hate Rudel. And the one the dragon chose was Fritz... you think that's a coincidence?"

To Luecke's thoughts, Izumi didn't think they would actually go that far. She wanted to reply as such, but thinking back to all Rudel had done to that point, there were some parts she could nod to.

"It was a setup? In that case, right now, Rudel could be..."

A bad premonition entering her head, Izumi's face turned pale. Her heart had been restless as of late, and she could only think of the worst.

"I don't think they'll do him in so easily, but Rudel's already been recognized as the white knight. Taking his power into consideration, as long as they prepared some highly skilled knights, they could capture him and kill him with

ease. But no matter how you look at it, that's a terrible hand to play. Killing him would be of no benefit to the country. They normally wouldn't do it, but Rudel obtained permission to enter the dragon dwellings."

While Izumi and Luecke thought, the hall hurriedly moved onto its next event. Fritz was officially appointed as captain of the royal guard.

"Rudel..."

Izumi muttered in worry as she believed in his return.



Where the royal family gathered, Fina looked around with a calm air. She knew it was a rigged election, and she was convinced Aileen had made a move. Calling out to Sophina, she confirmed the present situation.

"Sophina (Oh my~, so she made a move after all. Though I never actually thought she'd go this far. Looks like I've got a ways to go. That aside, are we really going forward like this?)"

"Yes, princess."

Gazing at her father Albach, she called Sophina close. Just like Fina, the queen was also seeking confirmation. But the area around Aileen alone was calm. A number of Aileen's guards headed to the king, and alongside the minister, they tried to persuade him to accept Fritz as captain and see how things went.

"What of ma... Rudel-sama? (More importantly, master. I don't care about some royal guard, and since it's come to this, I can just alter my plan and it won't be a problem! I'll use them for all they're worth, but first... Where are you maaasssstteeeeeerrr!!)"

"That has yet to be verified. It seems he did not come to the hall."

"Is that so... (This is bad... if master isn't here, then that will produce a delay in my grand plan. I can use the royal guard so they're not a problem, but if master isn't here, then my dream of Courtois Fluffy Land is gonecassee!!)"

"The whereabouts of the two dragoons is also unknown. Was it really the best option for us to have moved on our own?"

"Obviously. What sort of care-free things are you saying? You read the report

they filed, didn't you? I've got a good idea on how things went, so look into the high knights trying to persuade my father, and that minister as well. (When she's so naïve, I'm genuinely surprised my sister actually succeeded... I was right to choose his guards.)"

She recalled the unnatural report. In spite of the requested search, the report was vague and untrustworthy. She got the impression they never planned to conduct the search from the start.

Fina had read that report at the start of the first term. From there, she had Sophina's subordinates move on their own.

Fina gazed at the confusion surrounding her. It was at that moment. One of Sophina's men raced in. His brow oozed with sweat as he screamed an emergency request. He pleaded for the royal family to evacuate from the spot.



It wasn't just the heads in confusion. The hall was also in a panic.

"Fall back! Quickly, run away!! If you're here, you'll be trampled down!"
"I'm telling you to get the hell away!!"

The ones who suddenly descended down were Lilim and Cattleya. As their dragons flew down, they evacuated the knights and other relevant parties that remained in the hall. Lilim and Cattleya's dragons positioned themselves to protect the royal family.

Izumi rushed over to the two and asked about Rudel. She had been told they were stationed as Rudel's guard, and she determined they might know something.

"Excuse me! Are Rudel... Are Rudel and Sakuya safe!?"

Izumi didn't overlook the moment of clouding that came over their faces. But the two of them soon looked up to the sky and cried out.

"Ah, oh no."

"Everyone get down!"

Everyone followed their line of sight. There, they could confirm the form of a large dragon led along by legions of smaller ones. But it was a scene everyone

could only doubt. The small dragons, even looked on from afar, didn't give off an impression of being young.

More than that, the single large dragon was abnormally large. That much was fine. That much was fine, but the large dragon was unsteadily teetering through the air. It looked almost as if it wasn't used to flight.

The selection test hall, with all the participants, it had been set up outside. IT was impossible to conduct it at the palace, so it was held on a plain. If it wanted to land, then anywhere was fine. Everyone around thought so. But the unsteadily flying dragon headed straight for the hall as if sucked into it.

The knights and staff started panicking again. Izumi could tell by instinct Rudel was riding that dragon.

The dragon that approached was larger than any of the dragons one could normally see. Its overall body was slim, but its overgrown forelimbs and its four large wings that held up its large build could be called its characteristics, or perhaps could be called characteristic of it. It was a white and pretty dragon.

On its forehead came the glimmer of a blue gemstone. And there was a person on its head. At the individual in armor, Izumi gave a loud cry and waved her hands. While she didn't know why, seeing the dragon caused her to think of Sakuya.

"Rudel, over here!"

Spotting Izumi waving her hands, the dragon started falling straight towards her. When its flight was so unsteady, only its nose-dive looked sharp and elegant. Right, it was falling.

"You fooo!!!!"

"Why'd you have to call for it!!?"

"E-eeeh?"

Izumi couldn't understand why Lilim and Cattleya were closing in on her. Rudel was finally here, so she thought it was best to be close to him. Bht the two who knew the situation knew the intensity of the problem. Cattleya cried for those around to get out of there at once, while Lilim offered Izumi a simple explanation.

“That child is still terrible at flying!”

The idea had never occurred to Izumi and she looked up at the sky once more. The white dragon was falling straight towards her. At the same time, the legion of dragons started positioning themselves to protect the surroundings from that white meteor.



“S-so I made it in time!”

‘Yeah, I tried hard... praise me.’

A number of dragons came to dig out and support up ‘Sakuya’, who had collided with the ground. Rudel looked around and searched Izumi out. The white subspecies that had become Rudel’s dragon, ‘Sakuya’, had started a rapid descent upon starting her.

Still only able to use shoddy sentences, Sakuya had nothing in the ways of memory or knowledge. Naturally, she wasn’t supposed to remember Izumi. But once she saw her, she happily swooped down. Not listening to Rudel’s attempts to stop her... as a final measure, he pleaded for the dragons around to help.

“Yeah, you did your best. But everyone else also worked really hard, so you should thank them.”

‘Okay, thank you.’

Sakuya roared at the wild dragons around. Rudel jumped down from Sakuya and spotted Izumi. Sitting on the ground, Izumi was looking up at Sakuya.

“Izumi!”

As Rudel called out, Izumi stood and drew close. But perhaps in her confusion, she became emotional and threw words at him one after the next.

“You’re late, Rudel! And why did it come to this? Couldn’t you make for a safer landing? Is it my fault? Is it because I called out!?”

“... Don’t worry. It’s all my fault. And who’s in charge around here?”

He looked around, but he could only see knights looking up at Sakuya, and knights cowering from the wild dragons. Izumi also looked around, but with

everything that had gone on, she didn't remember where the staff had gone. In exchange, Luecke and Eunius rushed over.

Behind them, Aleist walked, looking over Sakuya. Eunius walked up to Rudel and made a mess of his hair. He yelled at him, but his face was smiling.

“Worrying us like that! What were you doing all this time, Rudel!?”

Luecke made a tired face, but looking up at Sakuya, he congratulated Rudel for fulfilling his dream.

“Your dream came true, Rudel. With this, you're a dragoon.”

Looking at the two of them, Rudel smiled, but Izumi couldn't honestly rejoice. She got the feeling he was hiding something. Aleist also approached, standing bashfully before Rudel as he spoke.

“C-congratulations.”

Rudel spoke with a smile. From Izumi's point of view, he was smiling, but it was a somewhat sorrowful smile.

“Yeah, thank you, everyone.”



Once the confusion died down, the royal family and those involved looked at Rudel's dragon. A large and beautiful build that made large wild dragons look like children.

The king looked at Rudel with a smile, keeping his mouth shut as he hit his hands together in applause. Following on from the king, Fina also sent Rudel an applause. She looked at Sophina, and pressured her into clapping.

On, and then another, the number of people applauding increased. In the hall as well, many were wrapped into clapping praise of Rudel.

Aileen loathsomely looked on the scene in the hall. The knights around her weren't clapping.

Before his own dragon, Fritz was on his knees as he looked on from a distance. Rudel's form was the very form of the knight he dreamed to be as a child, and his dragon was beautiful. Watched over by the wild dragons, and the

knights around were sending him applause.

All the commendation he was supposed to receive, he felt it had all been stolen away by Rudel.

Chapter 77: The Oath and the Little Brother

Once a conference on the country's future course was held in the chaotic grounds, Rudel called Izumi and the others to a tent that had been temporarily set up. Gathering Luecke, Eunius and Aleist, he started explaining everything in order. The black boar, the sinister bird, the black fog... and he told them about Sakuya. He told them slowly so his emotions wouldn't take over.

As Rudel calmly went on, he gave off a terribly cold impression.

He showed the will Sakuya had given Lena to everyone.

He told them how Sakuya, her life running out, had cast down that life for his sake. As he did, Aleist punched him. Growing emotional, he rained Rudel with jeers.

"To hell with that! If you had a grip on things, there wouldn't have been a problem, dammit! Why do you look so indifferent! She died for your sake, didn't she!?"

Eunius and Luecke held him back, and by their hands he was pulled out of the tent. In the end, Luecke and Eunius decided to leave the space to Izumi.

"All yours."

'Don't worry, we'll calm this guy down.'

"Hey! Wait! I still have something I want to say..."

Confirming they had left the provisional tent, Rudel stood and gave a bitter smile.

"Haha, that was something. To think I'd be punched by Aleist."

He did stand, but he averted his eyes from Izumi. Perhaps tired from the long trip, Sakuya was sound asleep in the tent. Izumi lay a hand on Sakuya's forehead as she called over to Rudel. Rudel was sure he was in for another put down.

He knew he had done enough to deserve it, and he intended to accept it all. But Izumi's words betrayed his expectations.

“Did you cry, Rudel?”

“? Yeah, I think I cried... I was crying the moment I opened my eyes. I can barely remember it, but I cried and walked out of the cave. There were lots of dragons flying through the sky. It seems they were celebrating Sakuya’s birth.”

Rudel tried to change the subject, but Izumi paid it no mind.

“I see... did you cry after that?”

“No, I don’t think I did. I was too busy. We had to train Sakuya to fly, and there were quite a few things I needed to hear. I had lost my sense of time entirely, and until the messenger from the princess came, I hadn’t even noticed. From there, I hurriedly prepared to return to the manor and made it just in time. No, I was late.”

I learned a new technique, Rudel gave a laugh as he spoke. Izumi wondered if Rudel’s business was him trying his best not to think about it.

As Rudel spoke with some jest mixed in, Izumi embraced Rudel, wrapping her body tightly around his. Rudel’s face was buried in her chest. As the power left his body, Rudel crumbled at the knees, and Izumi sat down to match his level.

“I’m sorry. For letting you go through the pain alone... it’s alright. You can cry if you want to, Rudel.”

Izumi gently pat his head. Rudel shed tears as he spit out his own feelings. Rudel could never rely on anyone, but the truth was that he was terrible at relying on people. To Rudel who never had people he could depend on from his childhood, he was unable to comprehend the events around him.

He had only actually understood Sakuya’s actions once everything was over.

“I-if only I’d been more level headed! It’s just as Aleist said. If only I looked at Sakuya more, it never would have come to this! ... But some part in my heart was actually happy I obtained a dragon. I’m the worst. The worst piece of trash! And yet, and yet for someone like me, Sakuya...!”

In the letter Sakuya left behind as a will, there were lots of words for Rudel. Izumi had faintly recognized Sakuya’s affection towards him. But her realization of it only made it more heartbreaking.

“She told me to be the strongest, she told me to protect someone! I have no choice but to do it! Even when I’m like this, it’s my promise to her... I... I have to continue being Sakuya’s ideal knight. I have to keep being the strongest or I’ll never be able to look her in the face!”

Like the string holding him back had been cut, Rudel spewed his emotions. As what he was holding in came out, it came out with tear after tear.

“You don’t have to endure it, Rudel. You can cry now.”

Rudel wept loudly, and Izumi held him the whole time. Izumi was shedding tears as well.

Outside the tent, there were three eavesdropping on their conversation. It was Luecke, Eunius, and Aleist. Aleist alone was in a slump, regretting the fact he hit Rudel. The one who looked after Sakuya was Rudel, and he recalled how he didn’t do anything in particular for her.

Eunius and Luecke thought back over all the unnatural occurrences, and as they thought, they looked at the sky.

“W-why am I always...”

“No, neither you nor Rudel ever reads the mood. It’s not like this is a first.”

Cutting down a depressed Aleist with a single stroke of the tongue, Luecke recalled the contents of Sakuya’s letter. He had been in it as well, and she wrote it was fun. He was seeing Sakuya, who knew she was going to die, yet hid her feelings, in a new light.

Eunius reflected in a similar fashion. Saw her anew, and cast some words to the sky. Even if he knew they wouldn’t reach, he couldn’t stand by without saying them.

“Good grief, she really was a good woman. I should’ve called out to her.”

The sky dyed with twilight; some part of it was suffocating.



Sakuya’s letter.

With her shoddy, large lettering, Sakuya had left a letter. It was a sort of will,

but the one in question hadn't written it with that intent. She simply wanted to write her feelings.

'I'm glad I came to the academy. I was happy.'

'I didn't have time, but even I was able to hold a dream.'

'My dream never came true, but I'm becoming one of the dragons so,'

'I'm becoming a dragoon with Rudel, so maybe it came true after all?'

'Thank you, everyone.'

She wrote down lots of names-the people who looked after her. Starting with Rudel, she even wrote the names of the cafeteria lunch ladies. Aleist and Fina alone were addressed dubiously. Stupid Aleist and Weird Fina. She thanked them both as well.

She wrote thank you a lot of times. Once it came to the latter half, she wrote her memories to that point, and the feelings she held towards Rudel. As the letter shifted into that portion, there were many places where the text would blur. It was clear she had written it while crying. She wrote she was happy he would read picture books to her.

She wrote she was happy she got to eat so many sweets. She was able to make so many friends... the last part was so blurred it was difficult to read. There were traces she had rewritten it a number of times. She left words as if to dote on Izumi.

'Do you think someone will remember me? Do you think Izumi will cry?'

'If she reads this, that means I'm already gone, right?'

'Was I useful? Was I of any use to Rudel?'

'I found my reason to live. Thank you, Rudel.'

'I've lived a long life, but these few years were the most fun I ever had.'

'Parting is sad, but thank you for everything.'

'Bye bye.'

And there, the letter of shoddy letters came to a close.



Once he had finished crying, Rudel stood and wiped his tears. Seeing Sakuya asleep, his face turned refresh. Deciding he wouldn't cry anymore, Rudel touched his hand to Sakuya's forehead. Izumi stood as well, similarly placing her

hand on Sakuya.

The blue gemstone on her forehead reflected the two of them like a mirror.

“Thank you, Sakuya, it’s because of you I was able to become a dragoon. I’ll never forget.”

“Sakuya, you saved Rudel. You were more than useful... I’ll never forget you, Sakuya.”

Rudel and Izumi linked hands. The large gemstone on Sakuya’s forehead let off light giving a feel as if Sakuya had replied.

As the two of them smiled, Rudel swore an oath to himself.

“I’m not alone anymore. My dream was a dream everyone made true... now it’s my turn to grant everyone’s dreams. I’ll be the knight everyone wishes for. I’ll be the strongest of knights. I’ll become the strongest dragoon!”

Rudel took a deep breath before muttering the rest.

“I won’t let this dream end as my own selfishness.”

As if to give a response to Sakuya’s final words, Rudel swore an oath to the sleeping dragon.

Outside the tent, Aleist wept as he muttered he would never forget Sakuya. Luecke closed his eyes as he prayed for her to rest in peace.

Eunius looked up at the sky, swearing he would never forget.



Within the next few months, word of Rudel spread all throughout the Kingdom of Courtois. It came in the form of an article, giving praise to the white knight who became a dragoon. The one reading the article was Chlust, the boy sent off to the outer reaches of the kingdom.

After having spent a year of his life in the borderland, he read the article on his brother Rudel draped over his desk, a smile on his face. The brother who trained him had become a dragoon. As his younger brother, it was something to be proud of.

“Oy, captain, did they write anything interesting?”

Calling Chlust captain and approaching was a large man of unshaven face. He was a commoner-turned-knight from the outskirts, and he served as Chlust's adjutant. In this far-off fortress where noble knights rarely proved any use, he was a man who had made light of Chlust at first.

But within the span of a year, Chlust had gained the man's recognition.

"Yeah, my brother became a dragoon. I was just rejoicing."

As he showed the article, the unshaven large man's read through with his eyes open wide.

"Now this is amazing. So the captain's big bro is an elite! Well, he's still a youngster without any real combat experience, so maybe you're the stronger one."

Gahaha, the large man gave a large laugh. As Chlust recalled Rudel, he was sure his brother had grown even stronger than before, so he probably wouldn't be able to win. Recalling Rudel's strictness, Chlust gave a bitter smile.

"More importantly, did something happen?"

"Oh, that's right. You remember the unnatural monster corpses and village attacks that have been going on in these parts? It seems the area's finally calmed down, but they've started breaking out around another fort. I did order the men not to let down their guard, but... hah."

As the large men breathed a sigh, Chlust breathed one as well. Starting with the fort's higher ups, the knights of noble birth slept from the morning, and they wouldn't wake until noon came alone. Even if they were awake, they would often drink ale and head off to the nearby villages. They even laid hands on the fort's funds.

Ever since Chlust got around to manage the assets, even they knew they couldn't go against the Arses name. But their attitudes hadn't changed in the slightest.

"Got it, I'll do something about the report. I'll have to reorganize the platoon's composition later."

"All yours, captain. We've got confidence in our strength, but reports are a no

go. They'll be so bad you'll be crying for pity. With the other guys, they'll accept it if I tell them the captain's handling it."

In a harsh environment, Chlust had grown as well. Tucking the article on his brother into his desk, Chlust thought of the report and troop composition as he gathered up some of the documents under his charge. Some of the latest documents were collected on the bookshelf.

From there, he pulled out the necessary files.

They had been increasing as of late, the reports of a black ogre. It was still on the level of a rumor, but they said a black ogre was rampaging through Courtois. On the appearance of a black ogre no one had ever even heard of before, Chlust also felt a sense of crisis.

In certain villages, it would attack only humans, and in others, it would only harm livestock. By the villagers' testimony, they had heard human voices as well.

But in Chlust's fort, the matter had been processed as a mistake on the villagers' part. It was unthinkable that humans would act alongside an ogre. And the fact it would only harm livestock was concluded as it wanting to fill its stomach.

Gathering up the documents, Chlust began investigating into the black ogre.

Chapter 78: Extra - Surpass Marty 5

A few days after Rudel had fallen onto the hall, Sakuya and all...

In a room of the palace, Fina received a report from the two dragoons. She wanted to hear the events that transpired in the dragons' dwellings, and the reason they were late to the selection test. The two of them had already submitted their reports, but Fina called them out saying she wouldn't be satisfied unless she heard the details directly.

Classes in the academy had already begun, but the palace was in a frenzy, causing them to take measures they wouldn't usually take. The fact Fina had yet to return to school was because of all the confusion surrounding Rudel and Fritz.

Who was more worthy of being royal guard captain? No matter how you looked at it, that was Rudel, but Aileen's faction wouldn't permit it. From Fina's point of view, it wasn't a problem however the hell Aileen moved. So in order to leisurely draft up her future course, she had called out Rudel's two guards.

She looked expressionlessly at the two before her eyes, Lilim and Cattleya, as Sophina put them under scrutiny.

"So after he obtained a dragon, they were training it to fly? You mean to tell me it's a child at that size?"

She tried to hear out their testimonies but there were too many peculiar points. First came the dragon. Rudel's dragon was even larger than a wild dragon. It was a size larger than the largest gaia dragon. It was such a dragon, and yet they said it was doing flight training, making it late to the test.

Anyone would doubt it.

"No, I did say it was an adult, size-wise. But it was only born a few weeks ago..."

Correcting the position of her glasses at Lilim's report, Sophina continued her questions.

"Newly born and an adult... I'm an amateur when it comes to dragons, but I

do know it takes some time to grow after they hatch from their eggs. Well, let's just move on. For what reason did so many wild dragons follow along?"

Cattleya answered that one.

"That's because the dragons said they wanted to give their thanks or something, and they wanted to look after Sakuya."

"Oh, can such a thing happen? Dragons are famous for getting less involved with one another than humans. I'll have to verify that one with Rudel-dono. Continuing on, why did you stay until after the deadline had gone by?"

From Sophina's attitude, it was clear as day she wouldn't believe them even if they reported the truth. Cattleya always had a tendency to look down on high knights, and her answers were becoming quite half-baked.

Understanding Cattleya was irritated, Lilim decided to answer everything on her own.

"Truth be told, when the white dragon was born, it seems she was unable to fly, and still immature as a dragon. The other dragons insisted their pride wouldn't allow them to send her into the world like that..."

"So everything is the dragons' fault. How convenient. It's something we'll never be able to confirm, so, well, power to you. But during that time period, what exactly were you two doing?"

"No, um... Rudel-sama said he would look after Sakuya, and wouldn't hear us out, so we had to accompany him."

While Sophina was irritated, she took care not to say anything too incisive. But to the earnest Sophina, Lilim and Cattleya's report was irritating.

"Report on the details! I'm getting tired of all these careless, vague remarks. The two of you have some responsibility in this, you know!"

"Yeah, yeah."

As Cattleya averted her eyes, her attitude showing she wasn't repenting in the slightest, the blood rushed to Sophina's head. Things wouldn't go anywhere like this, so Fina swapped out. Seeing Cattleya suddenly revise her attitude, Sophina mumbled complaints to herself.

“This isn’t getting anywhere. Let me step in. Both of you, can you give a detailed report on the events from the dragon’s birth to your arrival at the hall? (Hmm, you’ve got a ways to go, Sophina. You’re dealing with my master... it’s impossible to think things went down normally! Now what sort of report will I be able to hear!!? I won’t be surprised no matter what you tell me!)”

Amused within, Fina heard out the flow of events that led them to the hall.

First, after arriving at the dragons’ dwelling, they were put to sleep with medicine, and in that space, Rudel obtained a dragon. But in order to obtain that dragon, Sakuya who forcefully came along became a sacrifice... they gave a simple explanation of how that made it so the dragon born was far more immature than its appearance would suggest.

“... Is that so. That girl was...”

Even Sophina couldn’t understand what Fina was thinking. But expressionless as she was, she looked sorrowful.

“That’s where the problems began. The dragons started to get entangled with the white one in excess. It seems they were looking after her, and they said something about atoning for something.”

The reason Lilim’s words were so muddled lay in that even her own contracted dragon hadn’t given her the details. She was unable to talk with the other wild dragons. So she couldn’t learn anymore.

“They taught her how to fly in the sky, and how to hunt prey; meanwhile, we were living a survivalist lifestyle, but... Rudel-sama started training alongside a former dragoon’s water dragon.”

Fina’s shoulders were shaking a bit. She silently looked at the two before her eyes. Tell me what happened, quickly, Sophina could see her applying a silent pressure.

“At first, it was training on a dragoon’s way of combat. But along the way, it devolved into horseplay, and they started fooling around.”

As Cattleya recalled Rudel’s few weeks, she could only see it as them playing around. But Lilim to her side’s complexion changed as she revised Cattleya’s report.

“No, that wasn’t anything so lukewarm! Rudel-sama was definitely not playing around!”

“Eh? Wait, Senpai?”

“Lilim, go on. (What’s with their reactions... more importantly, I’m curious about this water dragon he got involved with. I doubt it, but...)”

Lilim got worked up as she spoke of the new skill Rudel had picked up.

“It was an application of water magic. Applying a slippery property to water, you use it to cover their body. It was considerably slippery, so at first I thought he was learning how to use traps or something. But that wasn’t it! That... that was a lost art omitted from the book!”

Slippery water... it was lotion. Meaning Rudel had learned lotion play. It was an ultimate technique Marty hadn’t noted down in his book. After that, Rudel perfected a special art of his own, but that is a different story.

“W-what was that!? By book, you couldn’t mean...!”

Lilim’s powerful explanation even shocked Sophina. Fina was expressionless, but she held up a hand to hold Sophina back as she urged Lilim on.

“To think ‘How to Pet a Dragon’ was still incomplete... in that case, could this water dragon you spoke of be the dragon of legend? (For real... come so far, master’s reached a height beyond my reach. No, this is a godsend! I must rejoice that what was lost has been revived!!)”

“Rudel-sama was considerably depressed, so he devoted everything he had, and lost himself in training. In the last few days, the dragon initiated him into the secret arts! At this point, there is no one in the world who can best Rudel-sama...”

“P-princess! This is a national crisis!!”

“Calm down, Sophina. I’ll take some measures... but this has become something terrible. Both of you, make sure not to speak of this matter outside. (It’s heeeerrre!! Master’s finally gone and done it!! I can’t sit still. I have to move at once... first, I should do something about that royal guard.)”

Left behind by the surrounding situation once again, Cattleya honestly began

to wonder if she was the strange one.

(Is it me? Am I the odd one out!? What's the meaning of this!! Senpai's been like that from the start, and that high knight I don't like was surprised, and more than anything... the princess' hands are shaking!! Am I really the strange one!?)

Fina immediately started thinking of what was to come. She had finished investigating into the knights who were sent out to search for Rudel, and the minister responsible. She learned they had only pretended to search for him, and she caught onto Aileen's schemes. There were plenty of ways she could make use of both facts.

"After that, we lost our sense of time until your messenger came by, and, well..."

Lilim struggled to go on, but Fina had already lost interest. To be blunt, she couldn't care less. If being late meant Rudel was initiated into the secret arts, she would even reward them for it.

"Good work, both of you. You shall hear of your punishment later, but as you've heard out my selfish request, I'll make sure nothing bad becomes of you."

"Your grace!"

"Your grace!"

Seeing off the two as they left, Fina ordered Sophina to lead the minister in.

"If you plan to punish them, shouldn't we report to his majesty?"

"Punish? What could you be talking about, Sophina? There is no point in reporting to father. The one who used the minister was my sister, and soft on the finish as she was, my sister accomplished her goal. It wouldn't be strange if there are some among the higher-ups who simply left my sister's actions be."

"Then what good comes of calling them?"

"That's simple. I just have to make it all go as my sister wants. The royal guard will be established, and her boyfriend Fritz can be captain for all I care. Let's have the minister help out too."

Sophina couldn't accept that Fina was letting Aileen be. She thought Fritz' conduct at the academy would be unnecessary at the palace. But Fina's plan was the opposite.

"Are you questioning my actions? I'm not leaving them be. More so, I'm helping my dear sister out. We'll establish the royal guard, and station everyone who shares in her ideologies there. (The demi-human discrimination is terrible among the palace's knights. We'll gather them all up in one place, and steal away their authority... when that happens, they'll be short on hands, will they not! And if they don't have enough people, then they have no choice but to supplement them from elsewhere!!)"

An organization called the royal guard would likely hate simply doing odd jobs around the palace. Foreseeing that, Fina hurried to form her own planned knight brigade of demi-humans. Her sister Aileen's actions had actually made it easier for her to move.

Even if, hypothetically, Aileen made a move, the royal guard would be her pieces. Fina would have to prepare pieces of her own. Her honest thought was to use that as a reason to create a brigade of fluffies. Persuading her father and mother, Fina prepared an opposing force.

She based her actions on the belief that Aileen would surely run reckless.

"Now things are going to get busy. First, let's put that minister to work... (Those small-time villains are basically just there to be crushed, and I won't even feel bad about it! How wonderful!)"

Sophina wanted Fina to put just a little bit of that decisiveness towards the country's well-being.



Changing locations to the academy, Rudel was talking to Izumi. When it came to the main event of the second term, for the fundamental curriculum, it was the wilderness training. For the upperclassmen, the individuals' tournament.

But the topic of their conversation was gradually drifting away from the tournament. At first, they spoke of who they'd go up against this time, and how Rudel's mana regulation was going. But once Rudel said he had learned a new

technique, Izumi held her head.

“Isn’t it amazing!? Marty-sama’s dragon personally initiated me into the secret arts! I have a long way to go to reach Marty-sama, but I think I’ve gotten just a little bit closer... Izumi, does your head hurt?”

“Rudel, from the context, I can understand you had some harsh training pounded into you. But you see. Why did you only train that side!? That’s clearly strange, isn’t it!?”

“What!? What about it? What part is strange? The application of water magic was truly difficult to learn. That slipperiness, or rather that exquisite sensation was considerably difficult to reproduce.”

Before Izumi, Rudel heatedly spoke on about lotion play. Izumi held her head as she muttered.

“Rudel, just what exactly are you aiming for? That’s got nothing to do with dragoons. The strongest knight won’t be doing anything like that.”

“You’re wrong, Izumi! It’s precisely because I’ll be strongest that I have to take it to the limit! Do you want me to tell you Marty-sama’s legends? Like how he leapt into an enemy camp alone? There was this one time he even punched the prince, you know!”

“... Isn’t that treason? A major problem?”

That conversation that didn’t mesh continued on a good while longer.

Chapter 79: Extra - Surpass Marty 6

“S-so even the secret arts don’t work...”

‘It’s all slimy and gross.’

Before Sakuya returned to the dragons’ dwellings, Rudel tried applying the dragon petting skills he had devoted his being too. But if he pet her, she just said it was ticklish. The hidden technique was just gross.

Rudel looked at both his hands. He had polished his technique. On Lena’s words, he had regained the love. But it didn’t have the slightest effect on Sakuya. Before Rudel’s eyes, he could see Sakuya calling the lotion disgusting as she played around.

Sakuya was an immature dragon born only recently. Marty’s dragon said it would look after her a while, so it was decided she would temporarily return to the dwellings.

“W-what am... I supposed to do...”



“I’ve lost my motivation (What’s with you, master... you’ll happily be sent off to the outskirts? Are you an idiot?).”

As Rudel fell into a slump, Fina was on her room’s bed, hugging her knees as she stared at the wall. As always, Mii and Sophina were loitering around. On that all-too-familiar scene, they no longer felt motivated to cheer her up.

“I even secured the funds. I haven’t gotten formal permission, but I’ve already started things to motion... and yet, it’s impossible for the captain to be absent, right!?”

Displaying her needless competence, Fina had built up an organization to oppose the royal guard, but here a miscalculation came out. As Rudel was thinking of heading off to the outskirts in the future, he easily denied Fina’s request to appoint him captain.

“I’m supposed to be the princess of this country, right? Why do I get denied

so easily? Are you telling me I fall short of that black hair!?”

Seeing Fina let off a black Aura, Mii finally came to console her.

“T-that isn’t true, princess. You’re beautiful and kind... there’s no way you fall short of Izumi-san.”

“Is it the breast? If there’s one field I lose out to black hair in, it’s got to be the breasts! I’m sure master likes them big! That’s why he shows no interest in my transient chest!”

“No, I’m sure it’s what’s inside.”

Fed up as she was, Sophina muttered at a level Fina couldn’t hear. In all honesty, she did actually hear it, but to Fina, it was but a trivial detail so she left it be. Her first priority was Rudel. At this rate, she thought she might have to take black hair hostage to conquer Rudel.

“Black hair was aiming to be a high knight, was she not... if her clan is placing its expectations on her, I can use this. Sophina, call black hair here at once. I’ll negotiate on the spot, and make sure she can’t make light of me from now on!”

“That’s not happening.”

“... Eh?”

“Black hair, Izumi Shirasagi has already received a tentative offer to become a high knight. With the formation of the royal guard, our already-present shortage of hands only increased in severity. The paperwork has already gone through, and alongside her graduation, Izumi Shirasagi will become a high knight. Well, she has more than enough aptitude, and it was a decision made with her relations taken into account.”

Due to the formation of the royal guard, Izumi’s instatement as a high knight had been set in stone. The knights who served Aileen had been estranged from their ranks. All the while, a crevice was forming among the high knights. The high knights were displeased with the formation of the royal guard.

But speaking to results, a number none-too-small had found enlistment in that same royal guard. Greatly harmed by this result, the high knights’ shortage of personnel only deepened the gap between them and the ones who had

transferred to the royal guard.

With their shortage of personnel, it was only natural they would move to secure more. It was decided there were no problems with Izumi's abilities, and she was among the many new recruits they were going to enlist this year.

"Black haiirrr!! (Dammit! If it's a tentative offer, I can't make any poor moves! If I push it and threaten black hair anyways, I'll have to erase her offer, and even master will grow suspicious. I-if master comes to hate me, my fluff utopia... my fluffadise will grow distant. Should I take the bet? Threaten black hair... but the risk is too high. For now, I should proceed with caution... right, I just have to offer a deal! With a deal that'll put me at as slight an advantage I can get, I'll threaten black hair! It'll be an official deal, so there won't be a problem!)"

There was another large reason Izumi was tentatively offered a high knight position. Her personal relations. The high knights had evaluated the fact she was a good friend with all of the Three Lords' eldest sons. She was seen highly as an individual capable of opposing the exorbitant Rudel

To the high knights who faced a drop in power, the ability to suppress the young ace of their rivals, the dragoons, was a large bonus.

"... You can't hide and threaten her either."

Sophina looked at Fina as she drove in the point. Her thoughts read, Fina panicked, but her face was expressionless.

"T-threaten? Your words do me ill, Sophina."

"Is that so? Until just a moment ago, you were all up to threatening. Well, I can see why you'd panic... but if you're worrying about Rudel, I think it'll work itself out."

"Fwah!?"

Changing her posture to sit on her soles, Fina raised her voice as she looked at Sophina. Her expressionless face pressured her to go on, and Sophina ended up taking a step back.

"Y-you're too impatient. Try thinking about it. He's the eldest son of one of the three lords, and the white knight who contracted a giant dragon no one's

ever seen before. There's no way the palace would ever send someone with such a degree and worth to the outskirts."

"You have a point. I had forgotten about that white knight and dragon bit. It seems no one's noticed. Master's true worth doesn't lie in such meaningless titles... hmm, no matter the era, you'll find great men who never receive the assessments they deserve."

Worn out, Sophina gave some vague yeahs in response to overcome the situation.



'I've realized my own ineptitude. I'm going on a journey. Don't look for me.'

Receiving the letter from Izumi, Eunius' hands were shaking. Not in fear, he was shaking in anger.

"T-that idiot!! Who does he think he is, going on a journey at such an important time!!?"

His rage wouldn't subside even after tearing the letter apart, so he let out a roar. At Eunius' rage-twisted form, there were some students who began to cower.

The location was the school cafeteria, and apart from Izumi who had brought the letter, Luecke was also there reading a book. After they'd finished their lunch, Izumi had shown Eunius the letter Rudel had entrusted to her.

The reason Eunius was so angry was that the individuals' tournament was close at hand. It was their last large stage, and there was a possibility the enemy he swore to defeat wouldn't even show up. It was something Eunius couldn't bear to be.

"He certainly is an idiot, but whether Rudel participates or not is up to him."

Luecke, who was uninterestedly reading his book, wouldn't be taking part in the individuals' tournament. No, he had a reason he couldn't.

"I'm not participating either. Well, this year, I have a reason, so I can't take part."

"What do you mean either!? Rudel is going to participate whether he likes it

or not! I won't let him run off with a win under his belt!"

The reason the uninterested Lucke couldn't participate was deeply tied into the tournament itself. More so, it was Rudel and the others' fault Luecke couldn't take part. However, something like that was irrelevant to Eunius. With Rudel's disappearance, he thought the individuals' tournament would become boring.

Izumi looked at the two as she let out a sigh. Gathering up the torn scraps of the letter, she tucked them away in her uniform pocket.

"Rudel didn't write that he wasn't participating. I'm sure he'll be back in no time."

Even though she said it herself, Izumi recalled Rudel's late arrival to the selection test. To Rudel, if there was something of more value to him than the individuals' tournament, then would he really take part? More than that, she grew curious about what basis he had to declare his ineptitude.

She suddenly recalled Rudel's murmurs.

'The secret art didn't work.'

"... Ah, this might be bad."

"What?"

Izumi's shoulders fell as she recalled Rudel's conduct and began putting the pieces together. She had never even considered he might disappear just because his dragon petting wasn't going well.

But with Rudel, wasn't it possible? Once she explained the surrounding events to the other two, Luecke put down his book, while Eunius started shaking in anger once more.

"Let's see. Looking at the result, it's sufficiently plausible. If you ask me, I'm more surprised there was a dragon Rudel's petting didn't work on. From what I've heard, it seems his sister Lena was able to win a red dragon over."

"T-the bastard... we've come all the way here, and he fixates on petting!? Now's not the time for that! What he needs to care about is the individuals' tournament!"

“I agree wholeheartedly.”



While the three of them worried for Rudel, Rudel had submitted the official paperwork to the academy to go on a journey. Petting various animals and rereading How to Pet a Dragon, it was a training without a definite direction. He walked as he thought over what he was lacking.

“Just what am I missing. I have the technique. I do love Sakuya. Then just what could it be...”

As Rudel earnestly mulled over it, when looked upon from the side, surely he was a refreshing sight. But the man himself was serious to no ends. He honestly worried.

As Rudel walked, three individuals stood to block his path and called out. Wearing different clothing than usual, ‘twas Fina, Sophina and Mii. The other guards simply didn’t make themselves apparent, they were properly stationed.

“You seem troubled, master.”

“I told you I’m not your master. What’s more, I’ve only just been reminded of my own ineptitude. There’s no way I could take a disciple.”

“Hmph, do you think you can run away with that reason forever? I heard you’ve already been initiated into the secret arts. From my, no from anyone’s eyes, it wouldn’t be strange for a master like you to have an apprentice.”

As Fina bit on, Rudel decided she had a point. He didn’t plan on taking a disciple, but it was true he had learned the secret arts. In that case, he thought he would have to make Fina understand he simply wouldn’t take a disciple.

“Sure enough. But I cannot accept my current self. I must climb to greater heights, so I am unable to take a disciple. Do you get where I’m coming from?”

Hearing Rudel’s words, Fina was expressionlessly convinced of her victory.

“Master, you’ll never reach any heights like that.”

“What?”

“I’ll admit you’re splendid, for being able to regain the techniques lost for a

hundred years. But try thinking about it. The way things are going, they will only be lost again. Even if another aspired for greatness, whether or not they could reach your height is...”

“And what are you trying to say?”

“Let me be blunt. Master, you’re mistaken! If you don’t let your craft be passed down and polished, you’ll never rise any higher. The techniques made to be handed hand after hand will rot away in no hands but your own. If he saw you right now, then surely Marty-sama would lament. When a successor finally came to inherit his art, for that successor not to take a disciple... learn some shame.”

Rudel couldn’t understand why she was angry, but Fina’s words did leave a deep impression on him. He thought of the feelings Marty had gone so far as to leave as a book. He thought and misunderstood. Surely Marty wanted it passed on...

The truth was much simpler. Marty simply wished to immortalize his love for his own dragon as a book. He overdid things and wrote of the technical details as well, but he stressed the words to his dragon, and at the beginning and end, he wrote love was the most important of all. He hadn’t the slightest thought for the world to come.

If he had such intent, he would surely have reported such high-level techniques to the country. Fina had noticed that, but she had lied in order to deceive Rudel.

“I-I see. You’re right. I cannot let all that’s been built up collapse. I have to answer up to Marty-sama’s expectations!”

“That’s right, master! (Yay, he fell for it. Master sure is easy.)”

Inside, Fina was drunk on her victory, but Rudel’s words left her in a daze.

“Then from here on, as you’re to be my disciple, I’ll call you Fina on all non-formal occasions. And also, I planned to use this journey to train. You’re coming with me.”

“Eh? U-um, master, I came to bring you back...”

“No backtalk! The only answer you need is yes. Now follow me!”

“... Yes.”

Fina walked at Rudel's back, and seeing them off the other two were left dumbfounded. From the start, this was an outing to drag Rudel back. They weren't at all prepared for a journey.

“What are we going to do about this?”

At Mii's anxious look, Sophina wanted to cry. It wasn't as if she could just scream, 'How should I know!?' so Sophina decided to negotiate with Rudel... as a result, it was decided the four of them would travel together.

Chapter 80: Extra - Surpass Marty 7

Rudel had taken Fina, Mii and Sophina along to the dragons' dwellings. In order to learn what his current self was lacking, he had come to meet Marty's dragon.

While he had technically dragged the princess along on a journey, at this point, he didn't see her as anything more than a disciple. Even if he showed his respect on formal stages, his attitude would take a complete change in private.

"You don't even have the basics down!? What's the meaning of this!?"

"W-wait, master! Don't drop me into the lak.... Gyaaah!! (I don't want this anymore! He doesn't teach me anything, and I can't put up with all this basic training.)"

Mii and Sophina watched in suspense as Fina was expressionlessly sent flying off into the lake. In the week since they'd arrived at the dragons' dwellings, day after day, Fina would be put to building her basic stamina and carrying out fundamental magic training.

But under the tutelage of Marty's Dragon, Rudel was learning the necessary abilities of a dragoon. He had already learned all the secrets she knew about petting, and the dragon didn't have anything left to teach him. But there were plenty of things he had to learn when it came to dragoons.

Once Fina was flung into the lake, Rudel turned to face the dragon once more.

'You're too kind. Treat her like that, and that princess will never advance.'

"I know, but she's still a princess of all things, so I don't think I can be harsher than this."

'You think? When this idiot prince ran his mouth on some stupid thing like wanting to ride my back, Marty smacked him and ran to this forest with me... with all of us.'

While Marty's dragon was the water dragon, she was also the boss of the dragons at the time. If the boss said she was going home, then even the dragons with contractors would follow along.

This didn't infringe on the promise made between human and dragon when contracting was possible. A dragon promised it would lend its power, but it wasn't as if it had to obey. The one who scrapped Marty's contract was the prince, and Marty returned to the forest with all the dragons.

'That guy's face when we said we'd be going home was a masterpiece! The palace was destroyed while we were at it, and I spent about two months here with Marty. That Marty, he got himself a grass skirt and spear and enjoyed it all the way.'

According to the dragon, the royal family took their knights along to apologize after two months. But it was a disgrace to the name of Courtois, and the truth had been twisted before it was handed down.

"Ah, I've read something about that in a number of books. But they didn't say anything about Marty-sama, you know? It did say he struck royalty, but he was never punished, so I thought it might be a lie."

'Lie? What are you talking about? Marty was young at the time, and he was amazing! He was old when they ordered him to retire, but even so, Marty was amazing.'

Reminiscing over it, the dragon continued to speak of fond times. Rudel was delighted to be able to hear out the dragon he admired. But to Fina who crawled out of the lake-and to Mii and Sophina-it only looked as if he was talking to himself.

After that, Rudel would occasionally let out a surprised voice, at times breaking down techniques, and as he spoke of how he was going to deal with Fina, the three of them fearfully inclined their ears.

But Fina was bored, and once she got tired of being afraid, she tried testing her petting on Mii. There, while it took a bit of time, Mii's face did indeed turn red.

"P-princess, any more is... I... I'm turning strange...!!"

Her body lurching in an instant, Mii collapsed on the spot.

Sophina looked at Fina's expressionless face at the time, but she would later tell her men it looked almost as if she was laughing.

“F-fwahahaha!! It seems I can do it too. (What’s this? So I can do it if I try! If that’s how it is, then even without master, my goal... I can become the ruler of fluffadise!!)”

“P-princess, where are you going?”

Holding confidence, Fina expressionlessly told Sophina.

“Isn’t it obvious, Sophina? Until this point, I needed master’s technique. But as I am now, I will be able to fulfill my objective. I no longer need my master. No, I no longer need Rudel.”

“What are you talking about!? Princess, get a grip on yourself!! Rudel is an indispensable individual to the country’s future, right? Saying you don’t need him... what about all the plans you’ve set up!?”

The expressionless Fina turned her back to Sophina as she headed towards Rudel and the dragon. Drowning in her technique and stepping off her path, Fina walked towards her parting.

“No, no, you’ve finally become his disciple, so why are you ruining that on your own? Listen to people when they’re talking to you!!”

Lately, Sophina had lost a large portion of her dignity as a high knight, and she grieved from her heart for Fina’s parting with Rudel. Of course, it was a worry that came from ulterior motives.

At the back of Rudel, engrossed in his conversation with the dragon, came the voice of his technique-drowned disciple. Feeling a terrible presence from that voice, Rudel turned, looked in Fina’s eyes, and understood it all.

Seeing her make the eyes of one who had lost themselves in their own power. Rudel-who had been smiling to that point-made a serious face.



‘This is bad. That child is making the eyes of one drowned in power. She does have a grasp of the fundamentals, but I never thought she’d lose herself so quickly...’

‘Hey, Rudel, play with me.’

‘Quiet down and watch, Sakuya. This is a match between master and student.’

With Marty's dragon and Sakuya watching over them, the two humans stood atop a log floating in the lake. In that place where neither side could avoid or step back, they could only let their technique collide.

Having obtained the technique she wanted, Fina had determined Rudel was unnecessary. But she wanted his technique on her side, so she told him to become hers.

Rudel thought of Fina's position and gave an immediate refusal. Neither side would back down, so things settled as a duel.

"Master, no, Rudel. You don't want to become mine? Even like this, I'm the princess of a country. There's no problem with your house or status. (Now what are you going to do? It's no problem to me whether I win or lose. I already have the technique I desire in my hands!! Now as long as I can obtain Rudel, it'll be perfect, but I don't have to push it anymore!)"

"I understand I'm not in a position to say this, but right now, you're making a mistake. I'm sure I've told you your engagement will create problems across the country as a whole. And you aren't looking at me... as I thought, taking you as a disciple was a mistake."

Atop the log drifting freely across the water, neither side gave the slightest twitch. For argument's sake, Fina had been trained in battle from a young age. But to the utmost, that was for self-defense and to make sure she didn't suffer from a lack of exercise.

The reason she got the mind to go so far was that of a disillusioned state where she had convinced herself she could do anything. It was an exceedingly dangerous state. If Rudel overlooked her here, Fina would undoubtedly step off her path. She would become a demon who wouldn't stop until she pet all the demi-humans in the world.

For the sake of Fina who had become his disciple, Rudel had accepted the duel.

"Rudel, if only you were satisfied with me... but you had to be tricked by that black hair!"

"Izumi has nothing to do with it!"

As a fish leaped to break the water surface, the two sprung to motion. In every possible way, Rudel held the advantage, but Fina had no attachment to the outcome. She saw this as no more than a ceremony to get Rudel to give up. But as the distance closed between the two, the one to get the first move was Fina.

“You let your guard down, Rudel! (Yaaay!! Now you’re mine!!)”

With all the technique she had, Fina exercised her petting on Rudel, but Rudel showed no reaction. As Fina panicked, Rudel gently wrapped her in an embrace.

“W-why...”

To a surprised, Fina, Rudel declared his own victory.

“I already told you. The most important part... is love. Though it seems you’ve forgotten.”

As mana emitted from Rudel’s body, and expression was born on Fina’s expressionless face. Her face turning red, it was a miserable face, but it was the first expression she ever made. From afar, Mii and Sophina looked on with disbelief.

“E-erk! (Crap, this feeling is...!! The inside of my head is going white... auh)”

Once Rudel released her, Fina unsteadily collapsed into the lake. Hit by the water spurt, Rudel silently looked at Fina’s floating body. Her expression was already gone, but her face held a faint red tinge.

The two dragons watching over the showdown each held a different reaction.

‘Marty, your will has been handed on.’

Perhaps Sakuya retained a dislike of Fina, and while she was happy Rudel won, her mental state was a conflicted one.

‘Play with me too!’

Rudel jumped into the lake himself, lifting up Fina’s body and creeping out of the water. Once he reached land, he put Fina over his back and called out.

“How was it?”

“... I’ve lost. I’m sorry master. I’m sorry... I was wrong. (He really is amazing.

My master is the best!))”

Rudel continued shouldering Fina as he made for Mii and Sophina. As he walked, he continued sending words to Fina on his back. Not the words of a harsh master, but the gentle words for a comrade.

“We’ve both got a long way to go, but the path is a long one. Do you think you can keep up?”

“Yes.”

“I see, I’ll be harsh again tomorrow.”

“Yes!”

Mii and Sophina watched them draw close, but they couldn’t keep up with what was going on. More than, that, Fina had finally shown expression, but the problem was that it wasn’t the sort of expression they could tell anyone about. There’s no way they could report a maiden’s deplorable visage.

“Sophina-san, was I mistaken? I can’t understand what the princess wants to do anymore.”

“What a coincidence. I can’t understand those two either. She insisted this would be a premarital trip, and said she was going to build it as an established truth, but now...”

As the two exchanged a glance, Rudel reached their side. Fina had heard the contents of their talk, but she spoke to them in an enlightened matter. It was only come later, after she had returned to the academy, that she regretted the fact she didn’t establish a truth.

But at that moment, she was completely satisfied.

“Both of you, marriage is a sacred rite. It is not something to undergo with such impure motives. Sophina, you’re almost passed that age, so please take it a little more seriously.”

The hair on Mii’s tail and ears stood on end as she opened her eyes wide. The princess of her ideals was before her. Nowhere could she see the form of Fina, who would always sexually harass her.

It was at that moment that Mii feared Rudel from the bottom of her heart.

You definitely cannot go against him, she needed to tell her clan...

But with her marriageable age brought up, Sohina had not the time for that. The fact she was the most mindful of was pointed out by Fina, who was usually the worst. Humans are hit hardest when they are told the truth. And by the worst person there was... she was filled with seething sentiment within, but she lowered her head and stood down.

Seeing Sophina twisted by Rage, Rudel made a misunderstanding. From her bloodshot eyes and shaking fist, he thought she was tense. Her hair had lost its gloss, and he concluded she had built up some stress. With his promise to Izumi, he remembered he couldn't pet her, but he thought everything else might be fine.

He couldn't pet, but Rudel was growing by the day. There was no problem with a massage. It was a wonderful idea if he did say so himself, so once he lowered Fina from his back, he went on to actualize it.

"Sophina-san, you seem considerably worn out. I made you tag along with my selfishness, so won't you let me give you a massage?"

"Ha? What are you... wait! Get those hands away!! ... Ah."

The lascivious voice of a woman echoed through the dragons' dwelling. She was caught off guard, but for a while to follow, Sophina's mood reached an all-time high.